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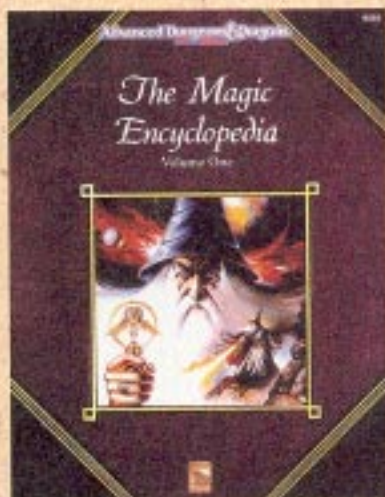
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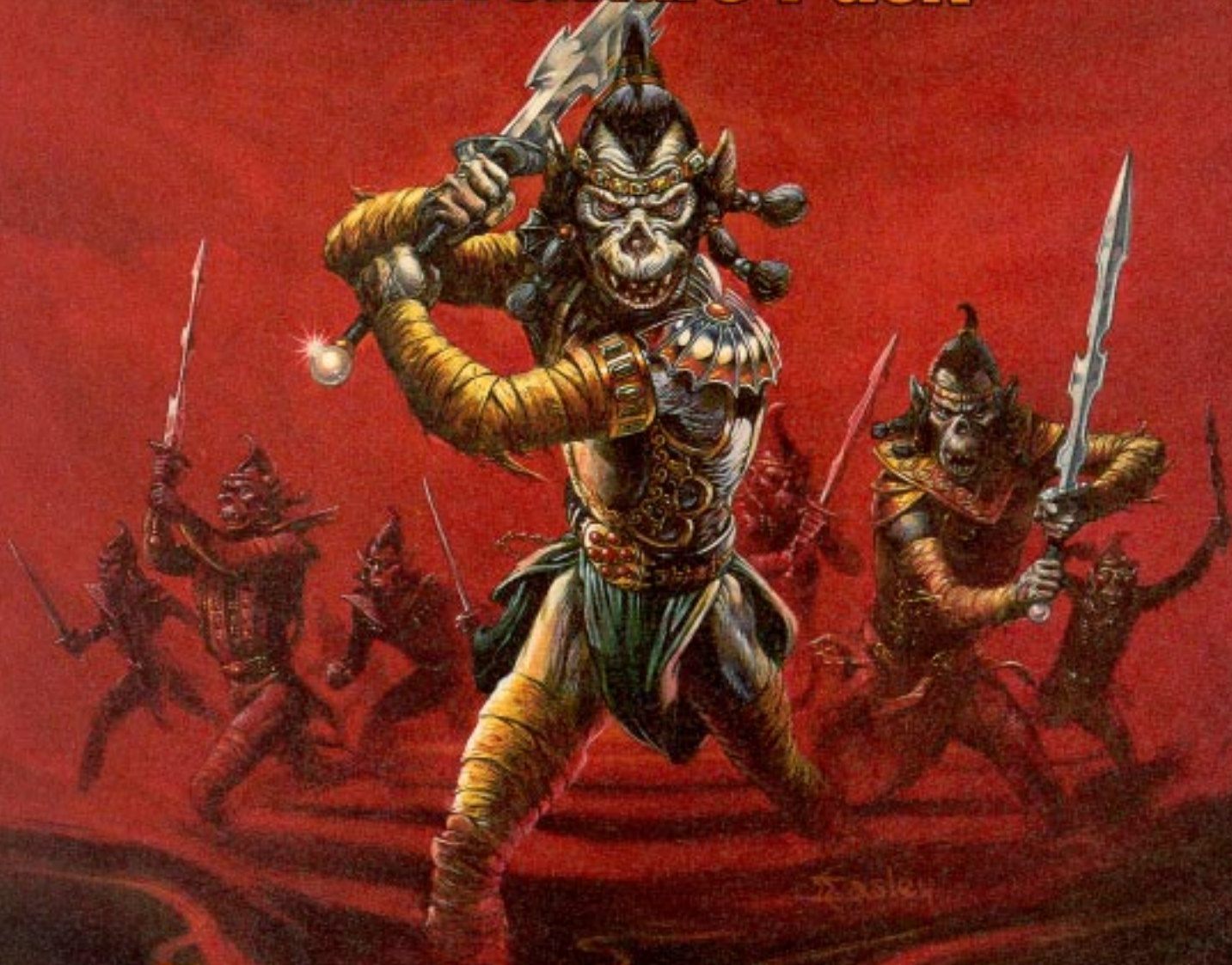
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COVER If the two children in this month's cover painting seem very lifelike, that's because they're modelled on artist Paul Jaquays's own offspring. We assume the dragon is purely imaginary, but one never knows with artists.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

First things first?

Dear Dragon,

Are we a dying minority? I am referring to those of us who enjoy and prefer the AD&D® 1st Edition materials and accessories. It seems more and more that it is becoming impossible to find resource materials for the 1st Edition. Personally, I have all of the original resources, but as time goes by I find myself needing new copies of books, modules, etc. Unfortunately, you no longer print any of the stuff. How can those of us who so love the original game obtain out-of-print materials? I have played and supported TSR products since the early 1980s. I empathize with your company's need to grow, but let's not forget about those of us who helped make TSR what it is today.

Timothy Woods
LaGrange KY

If you need to purchase good-quality copies of AD&D 1st Edition game products, you have several options. One, check all of your local toy and hobby shops for those copies (check the games sections of B. Dalton's and Waldenbooks, tool. Some of these places might still have the older volumes and modules on their shelves or in "bargain bins" with other out-of-print materials. Two, read the advertisements in DRAGON Magazine, including the "Gamers Guide"; some advertisers sell these older materials. Three, if you are a member of the RPGA™ Network, place an advertisement in the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine asking for someone to sell an unwanted copy to you. Four, if there is a classifieds section of your local newspaper, place an ad in the "Wanted" section asking for those volumes. Five, investigate any used-game auctions at local game or fantasy/SF conventions. Six, let all of your friends know which specific materials you are looking for, so they can check with their friends in other areas. If you have a pen pal or gaming friends in other states, write to them to see if they can turn up what you need.

TSR cannot continue to produce those older products that you are seeking, but there are still lots of options left to you. If you want new material for your AD&D 1st Edition game, you couldn't do better than to simply use the material for the AD&D 2nd Edition game. It will not take you long to make the necessary changes from one edition to the other, and you might even find new things to add to your campaign on a permanent basis.

Myth vs. fact

Dear Dragon,

I was wondering if you might be able to provide a list of all the editorials, either by Roger Moore or by guest writers, that discuss the issue of role-playing games under attack by the press, religious groups, or individual authors.

Having changed residences recently, all of my issues of DRAGON Magazine were lost in the moving process, and I can no longer look through my own issues for these editorials. I hope that asking this favor will help all people involved with role-playing games to present an intelligent and informed defense of them, and of the AD&D game in particular, if and when the need arises. For myself, I'd like to actually read some of the books that were mentioned as being antagonistic towards role-playing, and I would also like to keep a running file of all future editorials dealing with the subject. With a B.A. in psychology, I hope to someday put this information to use in helping parents and teens alike in making sense of "myth vs. fact" concerning role-playing games.

Greg Handleton
Cincinnati OH

Editorials dealing with the negative publicity and accusations made against role-playing games have appeared in the following issues: issue #125, "Myths"; issue #134, "Equal time"; issue #151, "Laying the blame"; issue #158, "Mica Antelope"; issue #171, "Role-playing and the real world" (by Michael A. Stackpole); and in this very issue. Furthermore, numerous "Forum" letters on this topic appeared in issues #160-162 and #181 (and, again, in this issue).

I've become more interested myself in reading the books that attack role-playing games, because some of those who accuse role-playing of being a dangerous hobby appear to have far more dangerous ideas themselves—ideas that are dangerous to things like the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and our religious and political freedoms, including the freedom to read and think what you want and to accept responsibility for being a free person. I have found more outright bigotry and intolerance in material that opposes gaming than I've ever seen in any role-playing rule book, and their works are intended for use in real life, not in a game of make-believe! (See the editorial for the facts on one particular case.)

There are lots of people who are genuinely concerned about what they've heard or read or seen about role-playing games, and they want some answers. I understand their concern (I'm a parent, tool, and there are answers for them. But there are also people out there who are making irresponsible claims about these games, offering everything except the facts to support

Continued on page 7

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EDITORIAL

A word of warning about a word of warning

Glenn Palmer, whoever you are, I owe you my thanks. I'm not sure why you had Chick Publications send its general sample pack and retail catalog to DRAGON® Magazine, but the material inside it sure opened my eyes.

But it opened my eyes to things you might not have thought it would.

Many of you out there have probably seen the little *Dark Dungeons* pamphlet pictured below. It's been around since 1984, and many copies of it have circulated through our offices here at TSR. At best, the creative staff here has found it highly amusing particularly when we painted out the word balloons and added

our own dialog. At worst, we have found it to be full of lies.

The booklet claims that playing fantasy role-playing games will grant you genuine occult powers, so that you can impress your friends, join covens, cast mind-bondage spells on your parents so that they buy more gaming materials for you, and so forth. Young people who have played fantasy role-playing games know for a fact that, alas, there are no mind-bondage spells, and you can't use the rules to cast a real-life spell even if you tried all day, because those spells are all make-

believe. It isn't worth impressing your friends with the fact that you role-play, either, as games are meant for mutual fun and entertainment, not impressing people.

Okay, so much for that. Now for a few words about other products from the company that publishes that little booklet.

As I write this, I have before me the Fall 1991 retail catalog for Chick Publications, the company that has been bringing you *Dark Dungeons* all these years. I've found it to be very informative, particularly in showing the wide assortment of "educational" materials that this company offers.

The most unintentionally amusing booklet it offers is *Who, Me?*, which is a sort of primer on how to litter. Actually, it tells how to distribute the little booklets that Chick Publications makes, offering hints like, "Could you leave a little booklet in a phone booth?" It then expands the range of places to leave booklets to include restaurants, restrooms, mailboxes, newspaper dispensers, public benches, laundromats, taxis, other people's coat pockets, rented cars, retaining walls, and bleacher seats.

But that's about the only funny booklet in the catalog, because the others tend to get right down to serious business, and bashing role-playing games is far from the top of the list of this company's publishing priorities.

For example, we have *The Curse of Baphomet* and *Masonry: Beyond the Light*, both of which claim to reveal the links between Masonry and Satan.

There's *The Devil's Disciples* and *Dancing with Demons: The Music's Real Master*, which detail how "Satan's handiwork" is seen in rock, rap, and "Christian rock" music.

There's *Big Daddy* and *The Collapse of Evolution*, which offer "the scientific facts that your teacher won't tell you" about evolution that are claimed to disprove it. (Note: I've read *Big Daddy*, and it has some holes in its logic that you could drive a truck full of Piltown Men through.)

And Chick Publications offers some very interesting books and tracts that directly attack other religions ("Satan is big in the religion business," notes the retail catalog on page 8). *The Traitor* seeks to prove the "falsehood" of Hinduism. *The Deceived* goes after Moslems. *The Trap*, *Satan's Master*, and *Wicca: Satan's Little White Lie* attack New Age and modern pagan groups. As you would guess, there's even a



In case you wonder if I took these quotes out of context, feel free to write for your own retail catalog from Chick Publications. It's free for the asking (I just now called and checked to make sure). Write to: Chick Publications, P.O. Box 662, Chino CA 91708-0662, U.S.A. Read it and see if I'm making all this up. This is America, and you have the freedom to think for yourself and find out the truth.

And if you ever come across one of those little Chick Publications booklets lying around in a phone booth, supermarket, or restroom, and you're seized with the urge to toss it into a garbage can—well, I'll never tell.

Roger S. Moore

People who oppose role-playing have as much right as those who support it to air their views. We should see to it, however, that our views are intelligent and well informed, and that we express them in a responsible manner. The best advice I can give on this is for each of us to take a look at our own experience with gaming and develop a sense of what it means to us; that will form a solid groundwork on which everything else can be built. If someone expresses some concerns about gaming, see if you can answer those concerns to that persons satisfaction. If you meet someone whose opinion is firmly set against gaming, respect that persons right to that opinion—but ask that your own opinion be respected as well. Be open to facts, but don't be bulldozed.

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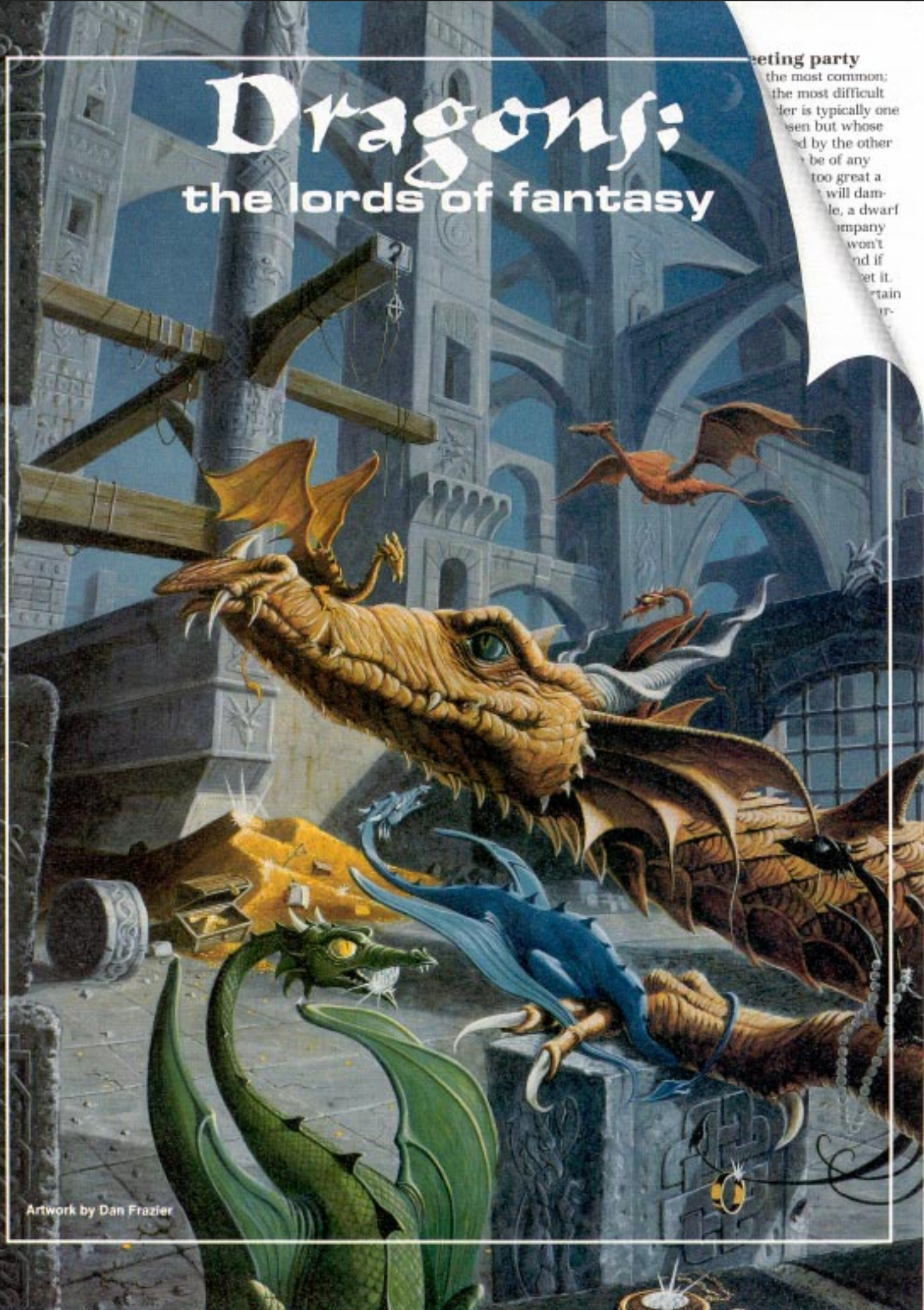
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Dragons: the lords of fantasy

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Artwork by Dan Frazier





Not Cheaper by the Dozen!

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Robert Lessl

12 egg-citing magicks from the DRAGONLANCE® setting

Many magical items and spells are specific to the world of Krynn, though the best-known items (e.g., *dragonlances*) are those related to the Dragon Wars. Few of Krynn's unique items were devised after the Cataclysm, mainly because of the Kingpriest's declaration of Manifest Virtue (defining magic as a source of evil) in the year 118 PC and the disfavor into which magic fell during the Age of Darkness. The origins of and procedures to reproduce many items of past Ages are still on record in the Towers of High Sorcery, however, and with magic waxing popular once again, many more constructs are waiting to be invented. Here follow a dozen wonders of magic from Krynn, with two simple themes: "eggs" and "dragons."

Incubalum

3,100 PC—Age of Light

Numerous strange things came into existence in the wake of the Graystone of Gargath's travels across skies of Krynn, one of which was the *Incubalum*, an egg-like object almost a foot in length and made of a hard, gray substance reminiscent of the Graystone itself. The *Incubalum* is AC 2 and is immune to all effects except physical force; it saves as rock +2 (against crushing blows and falls only) on Table 29, on page 39 in the *Player's Handbook*. If its shell is ever cracked, it will burst open, and a full-grown adult specimen of an egg-laying, land-dwelling animal will spring forth.

The hatched creature can be of any sort, from a normal bird or reptile up to a

dragon (but not a draconian; such things did not exist when the *Incubalum* came into existence). The more common the creature is in the world, the more likely it is to emerge from the *Incubalum* (see Table 1). It will not have memories of its "childhood," as it did not exist before the moment of hatching, nor will it have any preexisting loyalties besides those provided by instincts such as hunger and alignment. (The DM should determine the exact nature of the creature that appears, given the guidelines of Table 1; it might be good to create this being before the device is placed in the campaign, with a few notes on the being's reactions upon hatching.) This device has at times opened to reveal a creature of a type not known to be native to Krynn, though whether such oddities are from other worlds or merely from unexplored areas of Krynn is not known.

When the creature eventually dies, the shards of its egg come together (from wherever their location or condition) to form the *Incubalum* once more. It then *teleports* to a random location on the planet to await another hatching.

As an artifact, no one receives any experience points for making the *Incubalum*.

Egg of dragon breath

2,672 PC—Age of Light

During the Second Dragon War of Silvanesti, many magical weapons and spells were developed to use against the rampaging dragons. One was developed that was considered too horrible to be employed by the honorable warriors of that age. The knowledge of how to create this weapon was never lost, however, and people with fewer scruples eventually did employ *eggs of dragon breath* to a small extent during the War of the Lance, over 3,000 years later.

An *egg of dragon breath* is an actual dragon's egg, shrunk and hardened by powerful magicks (this perversion of the egg is the reason why good-aligned wizards are hesitant to make them). The egg becomes a device that shatters when hurled against a hard surface, releasing the effects of the breath weapon appropriate to that egg's dragon-type in a 20' radius around the impact site.

The damage done is dependent on the amount of effort the creating mage used in its manufacture. First, 1,000 steel pieces and one week of time must be put into the mage's creation efforts to produce a "hatchling's egg." Doubling this amount will raise by one dragon's age group the damage done by the egg (a "very young dragon's egg"). This doubling process continues until the enormous sum of 2,048,000 stl and 40 years is reached, which would be needed to make an *egg of great wyrm's breath*. The maker of such an item gains experience points equal to



Table 1
Incubalum Random Hatching Table

1d100 Creature hatched (examples)

01-16	Amphibian, normal (frog, toad)
17-23	Amphibian, giant (giant frog, giant toad, killer frog)
24-25	Amphibian, special (bullywug, fire toad)
26-37	Bird, normal (eagle, raven, owl)
38-43	Bird, giant (giant eagle, giant raven, giant owl)
44-45	Bird, special (roc, aarakocra)
46-63	Insect/Arachnid, normal (ant, beetle, spider)
64-71	Insect/Arachnid, giant (skrit, giant scorpion, giant beetle)
72-75	Insect/Arachnid, special (phase spider, ankheg, carrion crawler)
76-91	Reptile, normal (snake, turtle, lizard)
92-98	Reptile, giant (giant snake, giant lizard)
99-00	Reptile, special (hydra, dragon, dinosaur)

one-tenth of its manufacturing cost.

There is nothing to stop a rich mage from festooning himself with powerful *eggs of dragon's breath*. However, there is a danger in this, besides the hazards entailed in procuring the dragon eggs themselves. An *egg of dragon breath* is necessarily rather brittle, and if an egg-carrier falls down or otherwise takes a physical blow, and if there is no adequate protection for the egg (which makes item saving throws vs. all effects as if it were made of glass), the egg's effects are released around the bearer. Some magical weapons are best used in moderation.

shell of protection

2,660 PC—Age of Light

This item, a silvered chicken's egg in appearance, was created by Magius of the Red Robes during the Second Dragon War and given to one of the war's heroes because of a stricture preventing mages from using weapons of war. Thus it was not with him when he was captured by the Dark Queen, a captivity Magius did not survive. Since that time, the shell has passed through the hands of many an adventurer or nobleman.

To operate this steel-hard egglike device, one places it on a level surface and spins it on its wide end. From the egg's surface, a translucent shell of light springs forth in all directions to form a shimmering egg-shaped *shell of protection*, 10' in diameter horizontally and 15' vertically (although five of those vertical feet are under the surface the egg is spinning on, making the visible portion of the *shell* cone-shaped).

The device grants full *protection* from *normal missiles* within its boundaries. Additionally, any beings that attempt to enter its field are usually turned aside without injury, in any random direction that does not allow for penetration of the field. The percent chance of making it through the field equals the creature's hit dice multiplied by five, with bonus hit points added as percentage points. For example, a wyvern of 7 + 7 HD has a $(7 \times 5) + 7 = 35 + 7 = 42\%$ chance of mak-

ing it through the field to attack the device's user, and a 12th-level fighter (with 9 + 9 ten-sided hit dice) has a 54% chance. One attempt to enter the field may be made per round. Magic resistance must be checked before a creature possessing this characteristic (such as a dragon or fiend) makes its "turn away" roll; if the resistance check succeeds, the creature may enter the field easily.

The shells effects last as long as the egg is kept spinning, an activity a spinner can keep up for one turn per point of his constitution, after which he will have to rest for as long as he spun the shell. The spinner suffers an armor-class penalty of two steps while concentrating on keeping the shell in motion by spinning it with his fingers.

The maker of a *shell of protection* gains 1,000 XP from the creation process. Variations of this item have been seen that protect specifically against certain types of creatures, such as undead, dragons, etc.

Command Dragon spell

2,650 PC—Age of Light

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 5 Wiz Comp.: V,S,M

Range: 10 mi./lvl. CT: 3 turns

Duration: 4 hrs./lvl. Save: None

Area of Effect: One dragon

This spell was created by an elf mage too near the close of the Second Dragon War to be used to major effect in that conflict. When cast, the dragon affected is forced to obey all commands of the sort listed in the *suggestion* spells description (page 153, *Player's Handbook*). The caster and the dragon can communicate by way of a telepathic link as long as they stay within the spells range. As the mage uses telepathy to "speak" to the dragon, he need not know the dragon's language to be understood. The mind-link does not allow him to see, hear, or smell what the dragon can, but he can ask the dragon to describe what it senses, and it is compelled to answer his questions truthfully. The dragon cannot knowingly cause harm to the caster while the spell is in effect. Acts or sug-

gestions by the caster that violate the guidelines of the *suggestion* spell allow the dragon victim to make a saving throw vs. spells in order to throw off the spell entirely, though it need not obey "illegal" commands in any event.

Wonderful though this spell is, it has two drawbacks. The first is that the dragon, if it saves against the spell or is released from the spell's grip, will quite likely want to teach the caster a brief and fatal lesson about the consequences of controlling dragons. The second is that the spell must be cast on the complete and unadulterated set of shards of the egg from which the particular dragon involved was hatched; if even one shard is missing, the spell will have no effect. The egg's shards are destroyed in the casting, so that the spell can be used only once per dragon. Mages planning to make use of this spell often collect entire clutches of dragon eggs in anticipation of their future needs, then attempt to track their future "clients."

Dreamhold/The Promise

2,645 PC—Age of Light

The majority of magical items found on Krynn were created by elves or humans, but there are exceptions, such as the dwarven-made *Hammer of Kharas*. The rarest are items constructed by dragons.

Dragons have little use for magical weapons. The magical items they do make cater to different needs. *Dreamhold*, a gigantic quartz crystal carved into the shape of a multifaceted dragon's egg about 1' long, is such an item.

Gazing into the various facets of *Dreamhold*, one can see vignettes including scenes of sculpted caverns, great eggs hatching, the first flight of dragon-young, gleaming piles of treasure, and, as an unpleasant climax, the banishment of the dragons at the end of the Second Dragon War. Those who know the proper command words can even project these moving images into any space within 30' of *Dreamhold* itself.

During the exile of the Queen of Darkness, what had once been an entertaining toy became an object of veneration. It was used by Takhisis to incite the evil dragons in their return to Krynn at the onset of the War of the Lance. Thus, while this bauble was once valuable only for the material of its construction, it was renamed by Takhisis as *The Promise*, eventually becoming a religious icon an evil dragon might die to possess or protect. Good dragons are not caught up in this fanaticism and still view the *Dreamhold* as a device for entertainment, not veneration.

As a unique artifact, none but its original crafter gained experience points for its creation. Its sale value has never been calculated, but to the right buyer—such as a desperate dragon—it could fetch a colossal price.

Mishakal's token

1,902 PC—Age of Might

This beautiful translucent egg, the size of a chicken's egg, is smooth to the touch. Constellations of gems are visible beneath its ivory surface. This was a gift from the goddess, Mishakal, to the people of Krynn, celebrating the peace after the Kinslayer and Ergoth/Thorbardin wars that tore apart the world in earlier centuries.

It has no martial applications, but when placed overnight beneath the pillow of a woman who truly desires pregnancy, it will grant the woman's desire, without need for the participation of any man (although most women requesting the use of the token have a partner anyway). Once the token's part in conception is played, the pregnancy progresses normally and in complete health. Any child born shows a normal resemblance to its parent(s), not to Mishakal or any other. There is a 5% chance of a multiple birth of 2-5 children.

The token was freely loaned on a nightly basis to women of any race who came seeking the gift of Mishakal. When any area was no longer in need of the token's services, it was moved to another of Mishakal's temples. Following the Cataclysm, there is no record of the token's whereabouts, but it could conceivably still be in use somewhere in Krynn.

As with other artifacts, no mortal could make a copy of it, so it has no experience-point value. Those of the Temple of Mishakal would not offer money for its return should it be found, expecting those in possession of it to return it of their own accord. If some other person or institution wishes to hold the token, no one can predict what price they would pay for it. It is rumored that at least one good dragon that lost its eggs during the War of the Lance is searching for this item, in hopes of starting a new family.

Apprentice's egg

1,600 PC—Age of Might

When a wizard of Krynn declares his alignment and passes his Test of High Sorcery, he is apprenticed to a greater wizard to learn the secrets of their craft. One such secret is the manufacture of magical items, and the *apprentice's egg* is a minor part of this training, usually forgotten later by more accomplished mages.

The *apprentice's egg* is an inch-long magical construct used to hold the energies of a single cantrip spell in place, to be released when the egg is destroyed. The exact effects of each cantrip depends on the creator's wishes (subject to the DM's approval; the cantrips in the AD&D 1st Edition volume *Unearthed Arcana* are useful as spell guidelines). *Apprentice's eggs* each cost 10 stl and take one day to produce. The maker gains 1 XP per egg.

The egg can be thrown up to 30', and the spell it contains will be released at the point of impact if the egg fails an item saving throw as glass (see "Grenade-Like

Missiles" on pages 62-63 of the DMG for targeting information). As *apprentice's eggs* are made without use of *enchant an item* or *permanency* spells, they are somewhat unreliable, having a percentage chance of failing to work (rolled when the egg impacts) equal to the maker's intelligence subtracted from 25. A wizard with a 9 intelligence could make eggs with a 16% failure chance, and one with an 18 intelligence could make eggs with a 7% failure chance.

Some dragons are said to have learned the methods for creating these items, using them for their own amusement though they would never admit it to any but their own kind.

Egg of distraction

1,340 PC—Age of Might

The *egg of distraction* was the first attempt at a device eventually perfected as the *egg of fascination*. It was made by a wizard of the White Robes whose name has been lost to time. Still, both devices are useful, and a number of copies of each have been crafted since. In making an *egg of distraction*, the creator gains 300 XP.

When inactive, the *egg of distraction* looks like a normal-sized egg made of hard stone, with lustrous highlights gleaming in it. When spun on its wide end, these glints of color intensify, though not enough to provide any useful light in darkness. Anyone within 20' of the egg who is in a posi-

tion to see it, even in a mirror, must save vs. spells or be momentarily distracted by it. If distracted, the victim forgets what he was about to say (including spells he was about to cast) and suffers a -2 penalty on attack rolls and armor class for one round, because his eyes keep being drawn back to the spinning egg.

While this would seem to be a particularly effective weapon, its shortcomings are that it is indiscriminate, distracting friend and foe alike, and that the view of the egg is easily obstructed in a melee. It is useful, however, as a protection against mind-affecting spells like *hypnotism* or *illusions*, because the mind and eyes of someone distracted will always be drawn to the egg and away from the effects of any such spell being used against him. This allows anyone it affects a bonus of +2 on saving throws vs. "mind-magic" (spells against which a wisdom bonus would be applicable).

Keeping the egg spinning is no easy task, requiring a spin every round and penalizing the armor class of the spinner by -2 while so engaged. In addition, the spinner must make his own saving throw each round or become distracted himself, forgetting to continue spinning the egg. A spinner can keep an *egg of distraction* in motion for one turn per point of his constitution, after which time he must rest for an equal period.

Interestingly, dragons are immune to the

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hypnotic effects of this device. At least one small dragon was known to have used this item in the defense of its lair.

Egg of fascination
1,335 PC—Age of Might

Created five years after the perfection of the *egg of distraction*, the *egg of fascination* is a considerable improvement over that device. It appears much the same as the former—as a speckled stone egg—and it operates in roughly the same way, being spun on its wide end by someone who suffers a two-step penalty to his armor class every round he is engaged in spinning, but its effects are more powerful. This egg is also more difficult to spin than its predecessor, and a spinner can keep it in motion for only five rounds per point of his constitution, eventually resting for twice the duration he kept it in motion.

When spun, the highlights of the egg seem to spring off its surface and straight into the eyes of everyone within 30' who can see it (except the spinner), forcing each victim to make a saving throw vs. spells or be affected as if by a *hypnotic pattern* spell, standing *fascinated* until two rounds after the spinning stops. If something blocks the view of the egg, a *fascinated* viewer remains transfixed for two more rounds; if his view of the egg is restored before this time runs out, he will once again be under its sway without benefit of an additional saving throw.

Because the glints of light from the *egg of fascination* actually project from its surface when in use, its effects are more exceptional in a darkened area than in normal light. Thus, saving throws against the egg are made at -2 if the egg is used in darkness. Magical darkness, on the other hand, overwhelms the power of the egg, making it useless. Dragons are not immune to the effects of this device as they are with the previous one.

The maker of an *egg of fascination* goes through almost the same work as a maker of an *egg of distraction*, and thus gains about the same benefit from it: 350 XP.

Egg of imprisonment
640 PC—Age of Might

This item was created by an Abanasinian mage, Shishushkiri, to capture his foes for later questioning. It takes the form of a featureless, fist-sized black egg. To work, the caster throws the egg at a victim, making an attack roll against AC 10 minus any dexterity, shield, or magical bonuses the victim possesses. If the egg misses its target, it falls to the ground without harm. If it strikes the target, it expands into a dark, 7'-tall, "semi-egg" conelike shape that is 6' wide at its base (part of the egg's bottom is below floor level, 2' deep, anchoring the egg in an upright position). If the victim then fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation, the *egg of imprisonment* will have imprisoned him inside its mass; otherwise, the victim escapes from the egg, which then returns to its small form.

The enlarged egg is porous enough to allow a relaxed and calm being to breathe easily within it, but a struggling person will fall unconscious from lack of air after as many rounds as he has constitution points (though he can't suffocate). The shell is immune to internal attack, and there isn't enough room for a man-sized victim to cast spells or accidentally hurt himself trying to escape. On the outside, the egg is more fragile, being AC 7 and able to take 16 hp damage. If the egg is broken open by comrades of the victim, if it is voluntarily opened by someone knowing the proper command word, or if 24 hours elapse, the victim is released with no harm done to him. The egg cannot be moved, and it makes item saving throws as glass, with any failed saving throw destroying the egg; destructive spells such as *fireball* can destroy it if more than 16 hp damage is done, even if the saving throw is made (the victim inside takes either half or full damage, depending on the egg's success at its own saving throw). Eggs opened violently are destroyed in the process, but those that either "hatch" at the end of their one-day duration or are opened using the correct command word will revert to their normal form, ready for reuse.

Although an *egg of imprisonment* expands to a size large enough to encompass eight tiny-sized creatures or four small-sized creatures, this can only occur if the creatures to be imprisoned are already within such a small volume of space. Two man-sized creature may be caught if standing very close to each other. Creatures larger than man-size cannot be trapped by the egg; if it is thrown at one, the egg will attempt to encompass it and, upon failing, will contract back to normal form to fall to the ground. This item has proven popular with at least one dragon in the years after the War of the Lance, as it stops attackers quite effectively for later disposal.

The experience-point value of an *egg of imprisonment* is 500 XP.

Ridiculator
550 PC—Age of Might

Like many a tinker-gnome invention, the Ridiculator started as a simple though impractical device. In this case, the device was meant to extend the range at which a rotten egg could be thrown as a prank. The machine is now a state-of-the-art (as far as the gnomes are concerned) monstrosity consisting of a spring-loaded, catapult-like device to hurl "shells" (so-called even though they are complete eggs) at its quarry. The victim is designated by a complicated mechanical targeting system run by a trained operator from the Hurler's Seat in front. Behind the shell-arm, usually shaped like a dragon's head and neck (the egg goes in the dragon's open mouth) is a delivery system to automatically reload the arm with fresh shells from the Portable Production Module ("chicken coop") in the rear: a fully soundproofed cabin containing up to 10 contented and shell-laying Automatic Munitions Plants (the "hens"). The Portable Production Module is balanced on a delicate suspension system that prevents the Automatic Munitions Plants from being disturbed when the Ridiculator enters Transport Mode ("Hey, Telsa, hitch up the ponies!").

Under normal conditions, the Ridiculator can fire 2d10 eggs daily, at targets up

Table 2 Ridiculator Operations Data				
Type	Effect	Complexity	Modifier	Total
Move horizontal (throwing)	45'	6	-	6
Move horizontal (self)	24'	3	-	3
Soundproof	Against yelling	6	-	6
Vibrationproof	Against jostling	3	-	3
Final modifiers	Number	Size	Complexity	
Highest complexity	6	6	6	
Additional effects	3	-	+ 3	
Resizing	-	+ 4	- 4	
Totals	9	9	5	
For details, see the AD&D® 1st Edition volume, <i>DRAGONLANCE® Adventures</i> , pages 22-25 and 118.				

to 45' away, one egg per round (more eggs may be fired if they are available). The Ridiculator makes attack rolls as a 4-HD creature, with normal medium- and long-range penalties for missile weapons (16'-30', -2 to hit; 31'-45', -5 to hit). Shells that hit do no damage to victims beyond the embarrassment of being "egged" and incidental damage to clothing, porous papers, and other stainable objects. The presence of this one-ton device is immediately evident to any prospective victims, however, who may choose to avoid its attentions in any number of obvious ways. All of this may be had for only 1,150 stl (plus operating expenses to keep the Automatic Munitions Plants well fed). Details are given in Table 2.

Remove Disease spell

120 AC—Age of Darkness

(Necromantic)

Level: 2 Wiz

Comp.: V,S,M

Range: Touch

CT: 1 turn

Duration: Perm.

Save: None

Area of Effect: One person

During the Age of Darkness, true clerics were not to be found on Krynn, but false "clerics" took their place. Some renegade wizards used "miracles" to convince people of their authenticity as messengers of the gods; one such "miracle" was the dangerous *remove disease* spell, still seen on

rare occasions in isolated areas of Ansalon.

The *remove disease* spell has a misleading name; it merely removes a patient's symptoms, an effect that the practitioner tries to pass off as a full cure. Sometimes this leads to an incidental cure, if the patient's symptoms had prevented him from resting or eating well, but almost as often the patient's condition secretly worsens. All game effects dealing with the victim's physical appearance and perception of pain and discomfort vanish, but losses of hit points or ability scores continue, as do system-shock checks and saving throws. Because he can feel no symptoms, the victim usually takes no further steps to deal with his illness and eventually dies from a disease he might otherwise have survived (as an example, a pneumonia sufferer with his symptoms removed might go out into the cold and damp to do a day's work, suffering double pneumonia as a result without realizing it).

When this spell is performed, the symptoms of the patient are transferred to the material component—a freshly laid, fertile egg from any avian or reptile, including a dragon. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, the creature developing within the egg is likely to be disfigured but, strangely, not ill (such as a chick with all of the physical symptoms of the plague but without the plague germs themselves,

which still covertly attack the patient).

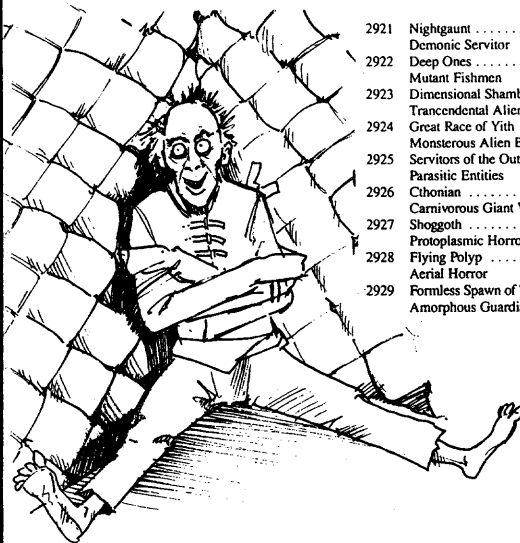
If, unfortunately, the patient should happen to die from the disease before the false cleric can get out of town, the egg can be brought forth and broken, with the pitiful creature inside being blamed for the miscasting of the spell ("If the egg you villagers had provided me was truly fresh, this would not have happened." [crack!] "See? The evidence of your mistake is to be seen in the contents of the egg.")

The false clerics wisely attempted to keep the nature of this spell secret, but even where the truth was known some people were willing to play the "cleric's" price in order to get relief from aches and pains they suffered, even knowing that the disease itself might still affect them. Given a choice between pain, nausea, fever, and the like while waiting for a possible recovery (or at least feeling comfortable during the wait), many sufferers during this age were willing to pay the price, which was wildly variable, and take the gamble.

Unfortunately, if someone in a later age acquired a scroll inscribed with this spell, he would likely have no quick way of knowing the spell's true nature (use an intelligence check on 1d20 after three hours of study to discover the spell's actual effects).

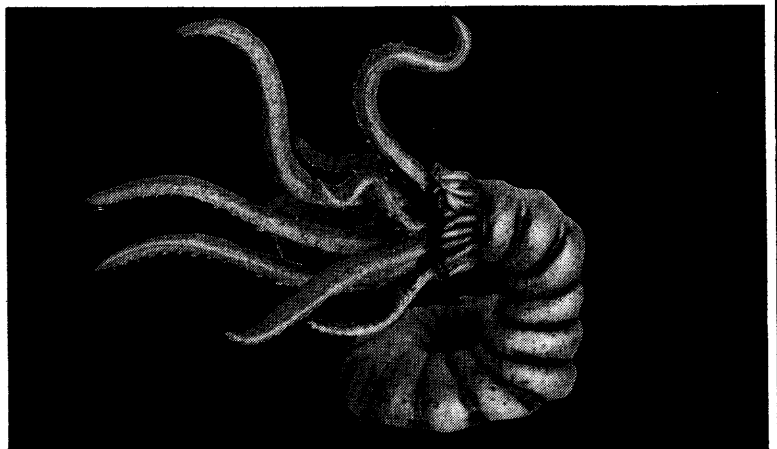
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NEW FROM TSR!



The Vikings' Dragons

by Jean Rabe

Artwork by Jim Holloway

An overview of the Norse lands' great serpents, part 1

Among the most feared creatures in the Norse lands are dragons, there called linnorms, as noted in the AD&D® 2nd Edition HR1 *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook* (VCS). These great wingless and legless serpents are among the fiercest of the Norse countries' denizens, in some cases even dwarfing the power of the vicious giants. Fortunately for the Vikings and other peoples, linnorms are also very rare.

Linnorms, like dragons in traditional AD&D 2nd Edition campaigns, have 12 age categories. Linnorms never stop growing, and the older a linnorm becomes, the more awesome and frightening it gets, gaining more abilities, a thicker hide, and the capability to mete out ever-increasing amounts of damage. Sages speculate that the oldest linnorms are insane; centuries of solitude and a fixation on power and wealth take a toll on their intellects. This has not been proven, however, as the only recorded survivor of a battle with a great wyrm linnorm was the hero, Sigurd, who slew the legendary Fafnir.

All linnorms are evil and seek to better themselves and increase their riches at all other creatures' expenses. While some of the craftier linnorms have been known to strike up temporary alliances, they turn on their partners after the great feat they allied to achieve is accomplished. Most linnorms are solitary because of their selfish natures and because they do not trust their peers, much less other races. Further, they have no desire to share their mounds of treasure with anyone. There are a few exceptions, although family-

oriented linnorms are not the most powerful of the Norse dragons.

This article and one appearing next month offer a creative expansion of the types of linnorms that can appear in a Viking-style AD&D campaign. These monsters can appear in any other sort of AD&D campaign as well, though their numbers should be extremely rare at best.

Linnorms and dragons

Linnorms use the same age-related modifiers as do traditional dragons (see Table 1 in the *Monstrous Compendium*, GREYHAWK® appendix, "Dragons"). Linnorms of each age category use the same hit-die, combat, and *fear-save* modifiers as do other dragons. However, linnorms do not generate a *fear* radius until they reach the venerable age category. At the venerable stage, a linnorm has a *fear* radius of 20 yards; at the wyrm stage, 50 yards; and at great wyrm, 80 yards.

Another marked difference between linnorms and traditional dragons is their age categories. Linnorms are left on their own at much earlier ages than other drag-

ons, sometimes being abandoned as soon as they hatch. Because of this, a linnorm grows up fast or dies very young, a victim of hungry relatives, hostile monsters, or human adventurers. Use the new table here for linnorm age categories.

Sages believe some linnorms can live 4,000 years or more, especially the dread linnorms, frost linnorms, and the Midgard Serpent. Some speculate that Corpse-Tearer, an infamous linnorm that torments the dead, and the well-known Midgard Serpent attained godlike immortality, and only their avatars rumble over earth and sea, respectively.

Combat with linnorms

Each type of linnorm employs a different strategy when dealing with foes. Some prefer to fight their targets physically, so their awesome breath weapons and magical abilities do not damage any potential additions to their treasure hoard currently on the persons of their foes. Others keep a distance between them and their foes, using only breath weapons and long-range magical attacks to keep the linnorms safe. No matter the strategy, linnorms use their attacks to their best advantage, often playing on their foes' weaknesses and fears. There are rarely any survivors of well-thought-out attacks by linnorms of the adult age or older.

Linnorms use the biting and tail-slap tactics of traditional dragons, with the combat modifier for age added to each attack. Breath weapons of any sort are usable three times per day, once every



three rounds, unless otherwise noted. Being serpentlike, nearly all linnorms lack claws and wings, though some that can cast mage spells can use *fly* spells upon themselves. Spell-casting linnorms cast their spells as do dragons, needing neither prayer nor study; they need only use verbal components to use them (casting time: 1). Like traditional dragons, linnorms make saving throws as fighters of levels equal to their hit dice, and those of at least old age are immune to normal missiles.

Like traditional dragons, linnorms have superior senses of sight, hearing, and smell. However, because the linnorms are left on their own at birth in most cases, their senses are even more acute. All linnorms are able to detect *invisible creatures and objects* within a 20' radius per age category, and they have a natural *clairaudience* ability within the same range. Linnorms have no telepathic or psionic abilities.

Linnorm lore

Tales and legends involving linnorms are prevalent among humans, nokk, nisse, sjora, huldre, dverge, maahiset, and other intelligent races of the Norse lands, all detailed in the *VCS*. The most commonly heard stories involve the Midgardsormr—the world-girdling Midgard Serpent, child of Loki—and Nidhoggr, Corpse-Tearer.

Nearly all Norse children are also taught the tale of Fafnir, the dragon slain by Sigurd. Many believe that humans can magically become dragons, as Fafnir was once a man. Other legends hint that dwarves or giants may also become linnorms. Noble-minded parents teach their children that excessive greed could cause them to become linnorms later in life.

Sages believe these legends have some basis in fact, although they admit the tales are filled with much embellishment and stretched truths. Clever sages use the tales to pinpoint where they believe linnorms roam. In the fantasy version of medieval Europe displayed in the *VCS*, many of the stories indicate linnorm sightings in Gardariki, Tafestaland, Permia, Karelia, Sweden, and Norway. Only a few stories hint that linnorms can be found in England, the Danelaw, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Wendland, and among the Volga Bulgars. A very few stories imply that the linnorms avoid France, Burgundy, Byzantium, Araby, and northern Africa. Adventurers have been known to use these tales in this way in their search for linnorms. Stories of such adventurers succeeding are rare and incomplete, perhaps because the adventurers do not want their treasure-take known, or perhaps because their plans were cut short by linnorm teeth.

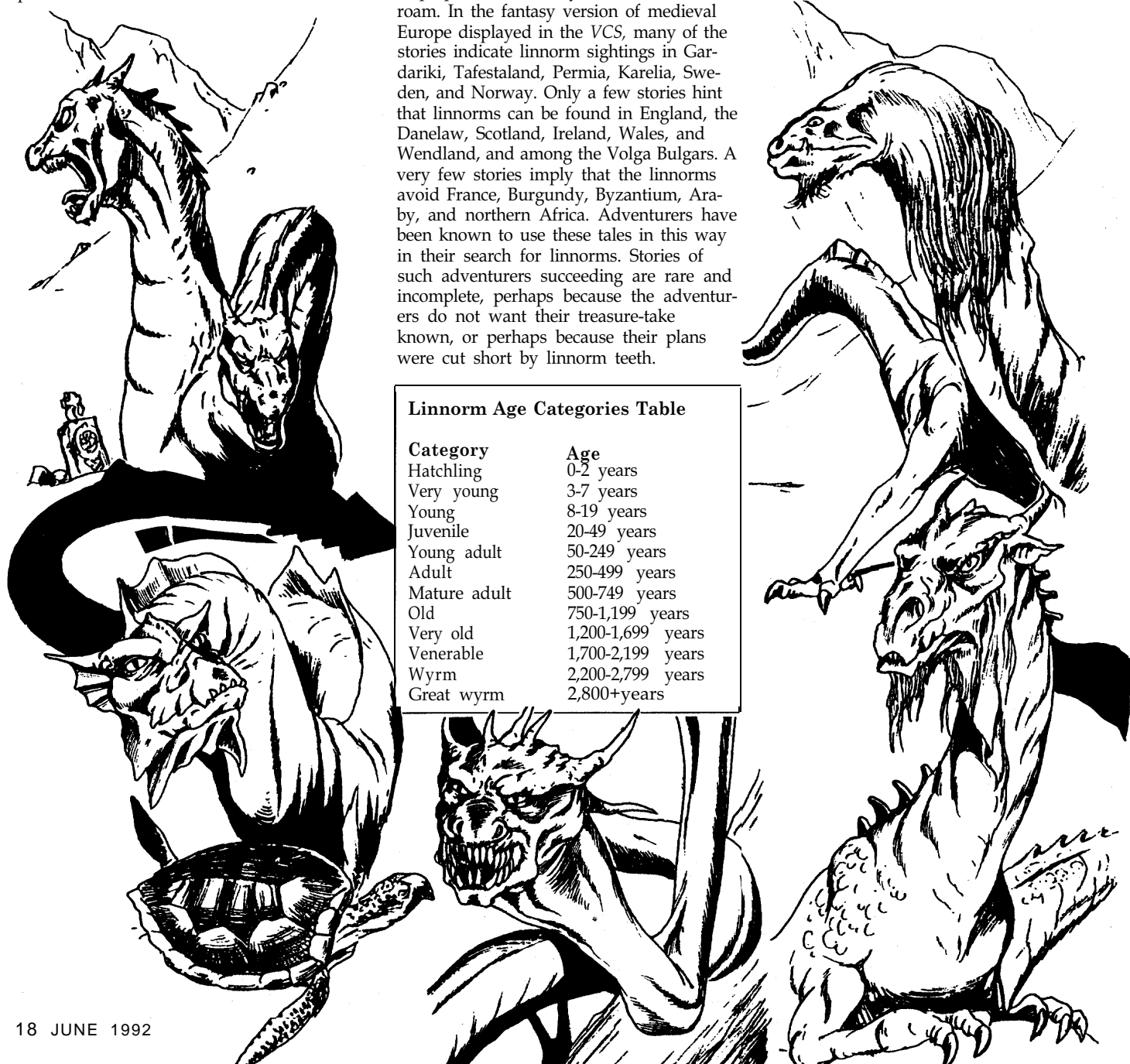
Linnorm Age Categories Table

Category	Age
Hatchling	0-2 years
Very young	3-7 years
Young	8-19 years
Juvenile	20-49 years
Young adult	50-249 years
Adult	250-499 years
Mature adult	500-749 years
Old	750-1,199 years
Very old	1,200-1,699 years
Venerable	1,700-2,199 years
Wyrm	2,200-2,799 years
Great wyrm	2,800+ years

Linnorms in campaigns

Linnorms should be used sparingly. Only a clever and highly experienced band of adventurers should confront a linnorm of the adult age or higher. Prior to encountering a linnorm, the player characters should hear tales of the feared creature, stories that greatly exaggerate its abilities and destructive accomplishments. However, these stories should be tinged with partial truths and should lead the PCs in the right direction.

No such encounter should be easy, as linnorms are fierce, deadly, and possess acute cunning. Further, if the PCs seriously harm a linnorm, it is more likely to escape to fight another day than to fight to the death. The killing of a linnorm is also sure to attract the unfavorable attention of other linnorms and equally powerful monsters, as the linnorm-slayer will be regarded as another potential rival.



Linnorm, Forest

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any non-arctic forest
FREQUENCY: Very rare
ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Special
INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-10)

TREASURE: Special
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING: 1 (5% of 2)

ARMOR CLASS: 1 (base)
MOVEMENT: 24, Sw 12
HIT DICE: 11 (base)

THACO: 9 (at 11 HD)
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d8

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spells, breath weapon, surprise
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Variable

SIZE: H (21' base)
MORALE: Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE: Variable

A forest linnorm is repugnant, more resembling a huge, grotesque snake than a dragon. Its slender, serpentine body is a mottled green and brown that masks its form amid the undergrowth and fallen trees of the forest. This linnorm, though not as smart as other Norse dragons, possesses a great ego, a natural cunning, and an unending cruelty. It considers no creature above it and hates all creatures possessing above an animal intelligence, especially beautiful creatures.

At birth, a forest linnorm could be easily confused with a large green lizard, as it has four legs and a thin, whiplike tail. As the creature matures, the weak legs atrophy, disappearing by the time the linnorm has reached the young adult stage. Brown splotches begin to appear on its now snakelike body. Its scales become larger and thicker, offering it greater protection, and its head widens. Forest linnorms speak the language of all animals in addition to their own language, but they are not able to converse with humans and demihumans.

Combat: Forest linnorms usually trap their victims, mimicking the sounds of injured animals to draw humans and demihumans close to their hiding places (they hide well enough to gain a +2 bonus to surprise rolls). Older specimens use illusions to further deceive their victims, springing when the victims draw near. Their prized targets are humans, as they view humans as beautiful—and therefore objects to be injured, punished, and slain. Forest linnorms often choose to use their breath weapon to weaken powerful opponents before physically attacking or using additional illusions. They tend to fight to the death, viewing no opponents as too strong and no threat as too dangerous.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A forest linnorm's breath weapon is a 1'-wide gout of heavy liquid that extends in a straight line 6' for each age category the dragon has attained. For example, a juvenile's breath weapon extends 24'. The liquid is very acidic in nature, causing damage and acting as a *wither* spell to a randomly selected limb of a victim (the victim is not allowed a saving throw). Forest linnorms cast



spells and use their magical abilities—the details of which follow—at a level of ability equal to five plus their combat modifier. They are limited to learning only illusion/phantasm spells.

Forest linnorms are born with a constant *invisibility to animals* power. At the young stage, they are able to *warp wood*, and at the young adult stage, they can cause *plant growth*. Upon reaching the mature adult stage they are able to cause *spikegrowth*, and at the very old stage, they can use *sticks to snakes*. Wyrms and great wyrms are able to *pass plant*. Except for *invisibility to animals*, each of these abilities is usable three times a day.

Habitat/Society: Forest linnorms are found in wooded areas throughout the Norse lands. No more than one such linnorm will be discovered within a 100-square-mile area, as they are territorial and will not willingly permit another of their kind within their designated home. The only exception to this is when these linnorms mate.

Forest linnorms are poor parents. When offspring are born, the male returns to its own territory. The mother forces the young dragons to leave her territory when they pass from the hatching stage.

These monsters make their lairs in densely overgrown sections of forest, wrapping their serpentine bodies about the bases of trees and bushes to become virtually undistinguishable from the roots and trunks. They prefer temperate weather but are able to stand great extremes of heat and cold. They usually store their treasure in hollow tree trunks. These linnorms prize gems and jewelry, but only so they can break them later. It is rare to find intact objects in a linnorm's cache, although there is usually plenty of gold and silver.

Ecology: While forest linnorms are omnivorous, they prefer the flesh of what they consider attractive creatures, such as stags, eagles, swans, humans, and demihumans.

Forest linnorms' natural enemies are thursir and kalevanpojat, giants who live in the wilderness and hunt the dragons for food and for their hides. Human heroes are also the bane of forest linnorms, out of the need to preserve civilization from the dragons' ravages.

Age	Body Lgt. (')	Tail Lgt. (')	AC	Breath Weapon	Wizard Spells	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	1-4	4-14	4	1d4+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1,400
2	5-10	14-24	3	2d4+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
3	10-18	24-40	2	3d4+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
4	18-26	40-56	1	4d4+4	1	15%	½E	9,000
5	26-34	56-70	0	5d4+5	2	20%	E	11,000
6	34-42	70-86	-1	6d4+6	3	25%	E	14,000
7	42-50	86-100	-2	7d4+7	4	30%	E	17,000
8	50-58	100-114	-3	8d4+8	4 1	35%	E×2	18,000
9	58-64	114-128	-4	9d4+9	4 2	40%	E×2	19,000
10	64-72	128-152	-5	10d4 + 10	4 3	45%	E×2	21,000
11	72-80	152-166	-6	10d4 +11	4 4	50%	E×3	22,000
12	80-88	166-180	-7	12d4 + 12	4 4 1	55%	E×3	23,000

Linnorm, Land

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any non-arctic land
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
 DIET: Omnivore
 INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional (15-16)

TREASURE: Special
 ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
 NO. APPEARING: 1 (5% of 2)

ARMOR CLASS: -1 (base)
 MOVEMENT: 18, Sw 12, Br 12
 HIT DICE: 13 (base)

THACO: 7 (at 13 HD)
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 claws/1 bite/1 tail strike + special
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1d10/1d10/3d10/2d10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spells, breath weapon
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spells
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Variable

SIZE: G (48' base)
 MORALE: Fanatic (17-18)
 XP VALUE: Variable

Land linnorms are driven solely by greed, and they enjoy twisting both humans and the land to their own corrupt desires.

Unlike many other linnorms, land linnorms have four legs, the forelimbs being useful for combat. The scales of hatchling land linnorms are small, green, and glisten like gems. As the linnorms age, the scales enlarge, lose their luster, and begin to change at the individual linnorm's whim from various shades of greens to browns to grays.

Land linnorms speak their own tongue as well as the languages of all Norse dragons. Land linnorms learn languages quickly. There is a 10% chance that a hatchling will be able to magically speak with all intelligent creatures. The chance to possess this ability increases 10% per age category of the linnorm.

Combat: Land linnorms are cautious, sizing up their intended victims before engaging them in combat. Land linnorms will sometimes follow a target for days—in a human or animal form if the linnorm is old enough to polymorph—before feeling it knows all the target's strengths and weaknesses and is ready to attack. Land linnorms carefully plot their every move before striking, usually beginning an assault with breath and spells before closing to attack with claws and bite. Land linnorms use their physical attacks only if they are certain they can best their victims. They opt to abandon targets that seem too dangerous. These linnorms prefer to attack small groups of humans and demihumans, avoiding large groups that might pose a threat.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A land linnorm's breath weapon is a blast of heat 120' long, 5' wide at the linnorm's mouth, and 40' wide at the base. All those caught within the cone must save vs. breath weapon for half damage. The searing heat instantly fatigues all those struck by it, whether or not they successfully save. Fatigued beings have their strength scores reduced by half (round down). Land linnorms' runes, selected at random or by the DM from the VCS, are always successfully cast.



Land linnorms are born able to cast *transmute rock to mud* and *mud to rock* each once a day. In addition, they gain other powers as they age, each usable three times a day: young—*invisibility*; young adult—*dig*; mature adult—*polymorph self*; very old—*stone shape*; wyrms—*conjure earth elemental*; great wyrms—*earthquake*.

Habitat/Society: Land linnorms are found in any non-arctic terrain, although they prefer hills near human communities. High perches allow them to watch the humans, noting any wealth leaving or entering the community. They make their lairs in caves; older linnorms use their *stone shape* ability to fashion their own homes, complete with traps and obstacles to kill trespassers.

Land linnorms typically join with others of their kind only to mate, the pair separating after the offspring have passed beyond the hatchling stage. The abandoned young linnorms are preyed upon by human and demihuman adventurers, giants, and other monsters of the land.

However, some land linnorms have been reported to join forces with others of their kind to attack a strong human or demihuman establishment or a group of humans too large for a single linnorm to consider taking on. Such alliances are usually brief, ending after the division of the spoils.

Land linnorms loathe humans and demihumans and go out of their way to kill them, as the linnorms are intensely jealous of the lesser creatures' ability to garner wealth. However, a few linnorms have been known to set aside their hatred, capturing humans with magical skills and forcing them to instruct the linnorms in new magic runes or to reveal treasures. In a few such cases, the linnorms have formed long-term partnerships with humans, with the linnorms receiving magical knowledge and material wealth while the humans are allowed to live as long as they serve their masters. Land linnorms are fond of wealth of any kind—old, silver, gems, and especially magic.

Ecology: While land linnorms are capable of eating virtually anything, including stones, they prefer the flesh of maahisets and dverges. Land linnorms have no natural enemies.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Runes	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	1-12	3-12	2	1d12 + 1	Nil	10%	Nil	8,000
2	12-23	12-21	1	3d12 + 2	1	15%	A	12,000
3	23-42	21-30	0	5d12 + 3	2	20%	A	17,000
4	42-61	30-49	-1	7d12 + 4	3	25%	A,B	18,000
5	61-80	49-68	-2	9d12 + 5	4	30%	A,B	19,000
6	80-99	68-87	-3	11d12+6	5	35%	A,B×2	21,000
7	99-118	87-106	-4	13d12 + 7	6	40%	A,B×2	22,000
8	118-137	106-125	-5	15d12 + 8	7	45%	A,B×3	23,000
9	137-156	125-144	-6	17d12+9	8	50%	A,B×3	24,000
10	156-165	144-153	-7	19d12 + 10	9	55%	A,B,C × 3	25,000
11	165-174	153-162	-8	21d12 + 11	10	60%	A,B,C × 3	28,000
12	174-183	162-171	-9	23d12 + 12	11	65%	A,B,C × 3	31,000

Linnorm, Sea

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any fresh or salt water
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
 DIET: Herbivore
 INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional (15-16)

TREASURE: Special
 ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil
 NO. APPEARING: 1 (5% of 2)

ARMOR CLASS: -2 (base)
 MOVEMENT: 9, Sw 24
 HIT DICE: 13 (base)

THACO: 7 (at 13 HD)
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite/1 tail slash + special
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 3d10/2d10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spells, breath weapon, capsize ships, surprise
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spells
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Variable

SIZE: G (48' base)
 MORALE: Fanatic (17-18)
 XP VALUE: Variable

Sea linnorms are coldly vicious, hating all humans and demihumans. They constantly plot to destroy human shipping, constructions, and settlements. Sea linnorms view humans and demihumans as a threat to all marine life.

A hatchling sea linnorm is nearly translucent. As the linnorm ages, its scales become pearly and thick, and they shift color based on the linnorm's will. From the young age and on, the linnorm is able to make its scales shift to whatever color desired, as if it were a chameleon. All sea linnorms have long barbed tails that they employ in combat.

Sea linnorms speak their own language, can communicate with all sea life, and have a 5% chance per age category of learning how to speak any human or demihuman language. They can breathe air or water at will.

Combat: At sea, these linnorms' favorite form of attack is to come up beneath ships to capsize them. Only sea linnorms of young age or older will do this. The attacked ship must make a seaworthiness roll as per the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 126. A modifier for the linnorm's size is subtracted from the roll, the modifier equalling the linnorm's combat modifier multiplied by five. Thus, a Viking longship attacked by an old sea linnorm has a $[60 - (8 \times 5) =]$ 20% chance to avoid capsizing. Sea linnorms use breath weapons, spells, and special abilities to kill any surviving humans, attacking physically only if necessary.

To attack humans along the coast, the linnorms slither out of the sea at night, then let loose with spells, magical abilities, and breath weapons at structures and ships. They then attack any survivors, using breath weapons, bites, and tail strikes. If seriously wounded, they will retreat to the sea again-but will plot vengeance all the time.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: The breath of sea linnorms is a cloud of caustic acid droplets that is 60' long, 60' wide, and 30' high. All those caught within the cloud must save vs. breath weapon for half



damage. This breath weapon cannot be employed underwater. A sea linnorm casts its spells at a level equal to eight plus its combat modifier. Spells they acquire must come from only the Animal, Elemental, and Weather priest spheres.

Sea linnorms gain the following abilities as they age, each usable twice a day: very young—*wall of fog*; young—*fog cloud*; juvenile—*gust of wind*; young adult—*solid fog*; adult—*airy water*; mature adult—*death fog*; old—*raise water*; very old—*part water*; venerable—*transmute dust to water*; wyrm—*reverse gravity*; great wyrm—*shape change*.

The linnorm's ability to change the color of its scales also aids it. The sea linnorm has a chance equal to its magic resistance to be unseen when attempting to blend in with its surroundings, allowing a +4 to the roll to surprise foes.

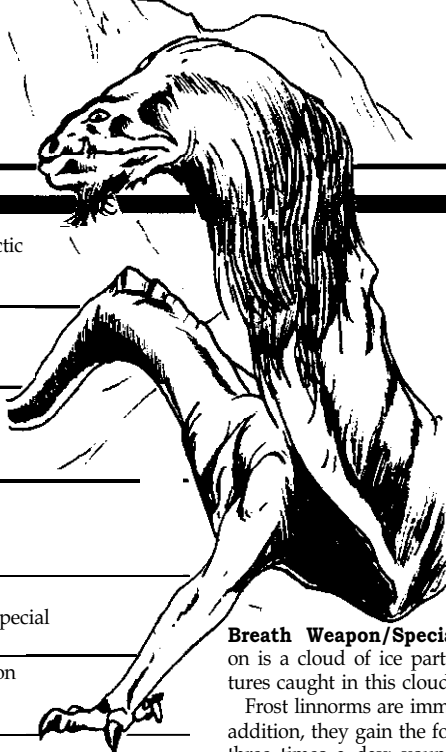
Habitat/Society: Sea linnorms are found in the waters surrounding Scandinavia and in waters near Permian, Greenland, Scotland, and Ireland. It is rumored they can be found as far south as north Africa.

While they can maneuver equally well above or below the waves, they spend most of their days underwater, surfacing to attack humans and demihumans. The lair of a sea linnorm is always found far underwater, usually in multichambered sea-floor caves. Sea linnorms of mature adult and older stages frequently have 1-4 giant squid, 2-4 giant sea turtles, or a kraken guarding their lairs. The linnorms hide treasure in the recesses of these caves, hoarding gold, silver, and especially gems, jewelry, and objects of art. Such lairs likely also contain "prizes" from battle: anchors, sails, and other parts of boats or docks.

Ecology: Despite their great size, sea linnorms require little food. Being herbivores, they eat primarily sea plants and are especially fond of dried seaweed, gathering it and placing it on rocky shores, then waiting for it to become its tastiest in the afternoon sun.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Priest Spells	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	1-12	12-32	1	2 d 10 + 1	Nil	15%	Nil	5,000
2	12-23	32-43	0	4d10+2	1	20%	½D	11,000
3	23-42	43-62	-1	6d10+3	2	25%	½D	15,000
4	42-61	62-81	-2	8d10+4	21	30%	D	16,000
5	61-80	81-100	-3	10d10+5	211	35%	D,A	18,000
6	80-99	100-119	-4	12d10 + 6	221	40%	D,A,B	19,000
7	99-118	119-138	-5	14d10 + 7	2221	45%	D,A,B × 2	20,000
8	118-137	138-157	-6	16d10 + 8	2222	50%	D,A,B×2	21,000
9	137-156	157-176	-7	18d10+9	3222	55%	D,A,B × 2	22,000
10	156-165	176-185	-8	20d10+10	3322	60%	D,A,B × 3	23,000
11	165-174	185-194	-9	21d10+11	3332	65%	D,A,B × 3	24,000
12	174-183	194-203	-10	23d10 + 12	3333	70%	D,A,B × 4	25,000

Linnorm, Frost



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any arctic or subarctic
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17-18)
TREASURE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-8

ARMOR CLASS:	-4 (base)
MOVEMENT:	12, Sw 18
HIT DICE:	15 (base)
THACO:	5 (at 15 HD)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 bite/1 tail slap + special
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	3d10/14d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells, breath weapon
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Variable
SIZE:	G (48' base)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Frost linnorms are perhaps the most territorial of all Norse dragons, never resting until all other intelligent creatures within their domains are destroyed. They are greedy, covetous, and consider all life—besides others of their own kind—beneath them.

At birth, frost linnorms appear to have fur rather than scales, but by the time they have passed through the hatchling stage, small, white, pearl-like scales appear. As the linnorms age, the scales become thicker (although not larger) and sharp like jagged ice. The scales are ever-shifting in color, changing from white to pale blue to transparent to blend in with the frigid environment. Unlike many other linnorms, frost linnorms have small forelegs with manipulative claws, though the forelegs are too weak to be used for combat.

All frost linnorms speak their own language and the languages of other Norse dragons. In addition, hatchling frost linnorms have a 25% chance to magically communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 15% per age category. By the time frost linnorms have reached the age category of adult, they can communicate with any creature with an intelligence of 2 or better.

Combat: More intelligent than most other linnorms, the frost linnorms spend months scheming and plotting against human settlements they discover, playing out the battles in their minds until all the strategies are worked out. Then the linnorms attack in the winter when the weather is on their side. Unless somehow taken by surprise, frost linnorms will avoid fighting without such plans. DMs should take such planning into account and should work out details of an attack to make it as efficient and deadly as possible.

Frost linnorms play upon their victims' weaknesses, and always use breath weapons, runes, and magical abilities before physically fighting. Further, they will employ any magical items they can use from their lairs against their chosen foes. Frost linnorms prefer to attack from any location that will put their foes at a disadvantage. They also attempt to keep their foes fighting on ice, increasing their chances of keeping the oppo-

nents off-balance. Frost linnorms are themselves incapable of losing their balance, timing, or orientation due to slippery terrain.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: The frost linnorm's breath weapon is a cloud of ice particles 80' long, 60' wide, and 40' high. All creatures caught in this cloud must save vs. breath weapon for half damage.

Frost linnorms are immune to all forms of natural and magical cold. In addition, they gain the following abilities as they age, each usable at will three times a day: young adult—audible *glamer*, *meld into ice*; adult—*phantasmal force*, *ice shape*; mature adult—*improved phantasmal force*, *control temperature 40' radius*; old—*spectral force*, *transmute rock to ice*; very old—*heal*; venerable—*advanced illusion*, *transport via ice*; wyrm—*transmute wood to ice*; great wyrm—*programmed illusion*, *transmute metal to ice*. The frost linnorms' special abilities approximate similarly named spells from the *Player's Handbook*. Frost linnorms use their spells and magical abilities at a level equal to seven plus their combat modifier. They are always successful in casting rune spells.

Habitat/Society: Frost linnorms are found in frigid climes, moving south in the winter months to devastate and plunder small human settlements. The older linnorms use their magical abilities to transform their territory into ice and shape it into elaborate, strikingly beautiful lairs. Walls and floors within the lairs contain large sections of mirrorlike ice that the linnorms often sit in front of so they can admire themselves. Frost linnorms are familial, and the larger a family, the larger the lair will be. Frost linnorms are perhaps the only Norse dragons that cherish the company of their own kind, valuing offspring and keeping them close until the offspring are adults. All offspring are included in the elaborate battle plans the eldest in the family develops.

The smaller the number of frost linnorms encountered, the older they will be. Single linnorms encountered will always be of the venerable category or older, as only the oldest of linnorms are without family—their mates dead and their offspring long since left to start their own families.

Frost linnorms bury their treasure within their lairs, usually beneath sheets of ice that would be difficult for trespassers to locate or move. They value gems, jewelry, and coins. However, they especially prize works of art. Some objects they consider too beautiful to hide with their treasure hoard, and these they place carefully about their lair so they can be admired.

Ecology: Frost linnorms require little sustenance and do not eat the creatures they kill. Sages believe these linnorms gain nourishment from inhaling frigid winds. They seem especially fond of early morning snow falls, lying on their backs with their mouths open to catch the most succulent flakes.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Runes	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	1-12	3-12	- 1	1d10 + 1	Nil	10%	Z	6,000
2	12-23	12-21	- 2	3d10 + 2	Nil	15%	Z x 2	8,000
3	23-42	21-30	- 3	5d10 + 3	Nil	20%	Z x 3	9,000
4	42-61	30-49	- 4	7d10 + 4	1	25%	Z x 4	11,000
5	61-80	49-68	- 5	9d10 + 5	1	30%	Z x 5	12,000
6	80-99	68-87	- 6	11d10 + 6	2	35%	Z x 6	13,000
7	99-118	87-106	- 7	13d10 + 7	2	40%	Z x 7	14,000
8	118-137	106-125	- 8	15d10 + 8	3	45%	Z x 8	16,000
9	137-156	125-144	- 9	17d10 + 9	3	50%	Z x 9	17,000
10	156-165	144-153	- 10	19d10 + 10	4	55%	Z x 10	18,000
11	165-174	153-162	- 11	21d10 + 11	4	60%	Z x 11	19,000
12	174-183	162-171	- 12	23d10 + 12	5	65%	Z x 12	21,000

Linnorm, Dread

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (13-14)
TREASURE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1 (5% of 2)

ARMOR CLASS:	-4 (base)
MOVEMENT:	18, Sw 12
HIT DICE:	20 (base)
THAC0:	1 (at 20 HD)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 bites/1 tail slap + special
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	5d10/5d10/6d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells, breath weapons
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spells, + 1 or better weapon to hit, immunity to certain spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Variable
SIZE:	G (68' base)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Dread linnorms, the only known two-headed Norse dragons, bear a never-ending hatred for humanity. Their ability to wreak havoc on human settlements is legend. These rarest of linnorms can inhabit any clime—the most frigid wastes, the warmest of lands, or the deepest of fjords. While they respect other linnorms and stay clear of their territories, dread linnorms have no qualms about laying low human communities and making their lairs in the ravaged countryside. These horrible raids have been few and many years between only because of the scarcity of these beasts.

While these great linnorms accumulate vast hoards of wealth over the course of their long lives, they do not covet gems, precious metals, and magic as other Norse dragons do. To them, such wealth is merely the incidental leavings of their conquests, and they never bother to inventory it. They keep treasure only out of instinct.

When dread linnorms hatch, their small, glossy scales are as black as midnight. As these linnorms age and shed their skins, however, the scales become duller and larger, shifting from black to gray at the linnorms' whim. Dread linnorms speak their own tongue and communicate with all other Norse dragons, but they have not been known to communicate with humans or demihumans.

Combat: Dread linnorms attack with little provocation but considerable forethought. Without exception, each dread linnorm first attacks with any spells that might injure its foes, then with its twin breath weapons, the left head breathing one round before the right (the heads alternate their attacks every round thereafter until each head has breathed three times). The few opponents who survive the initial onslaught are attacked with further spells and breath weapons before the great linnorm decides whether to slither closer to use its twin bites. Some dread linnorms will continue long-range assaults from the air using the wizard spell *fly* (should they possess that spell) until they believe the target is weak enough to be attacked physically or until the *fly* spell expires.



Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: The right head of a dread linnorm breathes a magical cone of chilling wind that is 3' wide at the linnorm's mouth, 120' long, and 60' wide at its terminus. In addition to causing damage, this breath knocks free-moving victims back 2' for every point of damage suffered from the breath. The left head of the dread linnorm breathes a cloud of hot dust 80' long, 50' wide, and 30' high. Creatures caught in either breath must save vs. breath weapon for half damage.

Dread linnorms are immune to all enchantment/charm spells. In addition, dread linnorms gain the following abilities as they age: juvenile—*telekinesis* at will, once per round; adult—*move earth* four times per day; old—*power word*, *stun* three times per day; venerable—*energy drain* at will (must make a successful bite attack); great wyrm—*antipathy-sympathy* twice per day. They can also learn wizard spells (select specific spells at random from the spell lists in the *Player's Handbook*). All spells and magical abilities are used at a level equal to eight plus the linnorm's combat modifier.

Habitat/Society: Dread linnorms live in desolate places far from the lairs of other linnorms and the communities of men. They prefer deep, twisting caverns in which they set up elaborate traps to confuse and kill trespassers. A dread linnorm shares its lair only when it mates, once every 40-50 years. The parents stay together until the eggs hatch, then go their separate ways, leaving the hatchlings to fend for themselves. The dread linnorm's lack of regard for its offspring is undoubtedly why there are so few of them.

Dread linnorms' treasure is usually scattered throughout their lairs in various mounds upon which the linnorms sometimes lie. The treasure is ill cared for and may include damaged and destroyed goods. Slaves and prisoners are never taken.

Ecology: Dread linnorms, like other races of Norse dragons, seem to require little sustenance. However, these great linnorms have acquired a taste for wood seasoned by salt water and will attack ships to acquire that treat.

Dread linnorms of the juvenile stage and older have no known predators, except perhaps brave giant bands. However, hatchlings and young are stalked by giants for food and as trophies, and by human heroes to limit the monsters' population. Ω

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Wizard Spells	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	3-24	3-24	-1	2d8+1	1	40%	½H, S	13,000
2	25-42	25-42	-2	4d8+2	2	45%	H,S	14,000
3	43-57	43-57	-3	6d8+3	3	50%	H,S	15,000
4	58-76	58-76	-4	8d8+4	3 1	55%	H,S	17,000
5	77-96	77-96	-5	10d8 + 5	3 2 1	60%	H,S×2	18,000
6	97-107	97-107	-6	12d8 + 6	4 3 2	65%	H,S×2	20,000
7	108-129	108-129	-7	14d8 + 7	5 3 3 1	70%	H,S×2	21,000
8	130-156	130-156	-8	16d8+8	5 4 3 2	75%	H,S×3	23,000
9	157-186	157-186	-9	18d8 + 9	6 4 4 3	80%	H,S×3	24,000
10	187-217	187-217	-10	20d8 + 10	6 4 4 4 1	85%	H,S×3	26,000
11	218-237	218-237	-11	22d8 + 11	7 5 4 4 2	90%	H,S×4	27,000
12	238-265	238-265	-12	24d8 + 12	7 5 5 4 3	95%	H,S×4	28,000

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The Dragon's Bestiary



by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by James Holloway

Some of the uglier branches of the dragons' family tree

Swamp Wurm

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Subarctic/Lakes (guivre); Temperate and Subtropical/Swamp (knucker)*

FREQUENCY *Rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *Carnivore*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low (5-7)*

TREASURE: *G*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (10% of 2)*

ARMOR CLASS: *4*

MOVEMENT: *9, Sw 15*

HIT DICE: *8*

THACO: *13*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1 or 2*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *4-16 or 4-16/2-16*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon, constriction, surprise*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Half damage from fire-based (guivre) or frost-based (knucker) attacks*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

SIZE: *G (30'-40' long)*

MORALE: *Steady (12)*

XP VALUE: *5,000*

Swamp wyrms are huge legless reptiles that are distantly related to dragons; they also appear to be related to constrictor snakes. Their bodies are serpentine, but their heads are quite draconic. Swamp wyrms come in two distinct though similar species: the knucker and the guivre (giv'-ray), names given them before it was realized that they were so closely related. The olive-hued knucker prefers warm climates, while the pale-green guivre loves cold ones. They can breathe water or air with equal ease.

Combat: The swamp wurm's favored hunting method is to lie barely submerged in murky water (it can see perfectly





through it), then grab anything that comes down to drink. This tactic gives it a +2 bonus to surprise. A swamp wyrm fights using a bite-constriction combination. If it can successfully bite an opponent, it then attempts to wrap its body around the foe (requiring another attack roll). A successful hit means the victim has been caught in the swamp wyrm's coils and can be crushed starting on the following round; the victim can also be bitten with a +4 to the swamp wyrm's attack roll, the victim gaining no dexterity or shield bonuses, once per round thereafter. Each wyrm also has a breath weapon: a 30' cone, 5' wide at the base and 15' at its terminus. The breath weapon does 4-40 hp damage (half with a saving throw vs. breath weapons). The guivre (surprisingly) breathes fire, and the knucker breathes frost. In general, the breath weapon will be saved for emergencies or obviously dangerous opponents, as it can be used only three times a day. A swamp wyrm will also take only half damage from attack forms similar to its breath weapon (i.e., fire and heat for the guivre, and frost and cold for the knucker).

Habitat/Society: Swamp wyrms make their homes in remote wilderness areas, in small, still lakes called either "knucker holes" or "guivre pools," depending on the occupant. The water temperature is strongly affected by a magical secretion from the swamp wyrms' scales. Guivre pools are always steaming hot, melting snow and ice around them like hot

springs, while knucker holes are chill, fog-shrouded, and sometimes iced over, killing all vegetation around them. Stagnant waters from these lakes are poisonous to all except swamp wyrms and other reptiles, thanks to the secretion; those drinking the water must save vs. poison or suffer 1-4 hp damage per round for 1-6 rounds.

Like dragons, swamp wyrms prefer to live alone, coming together only in the spring for mating though they rarely if ever fight with one another. Male and female swamp wyrms of either species collect treasure hoards, which they display to all other visiting wyrms. The wyrms with the most treasure in their hoards have first pick of the available members of the opposite sex for purposes of mating, leading many sages to suppose that dragons gather treasure for similar reasons (although this isn't particularly true). This seems to be the only reason they bother to collect treasure, as they never use it to bargain, either to gain allies or to save their own lives. Swamp wyrms give birth to 1-4 young three months after mating.

Swamp wyrms speak only a very crude language (dubbed Wyrmic), reserving their brain power for discovering clever ways to capture prey. They will eagerly fight all other large creatures besides themselves, including dragons, in order to gain more treasure.

Ecology: Swamp wyrms are fierce carnivores, living on any creatures that come too near their pools. They often slither into nearby bodies of water, even oceans,

to hunt food (most animals soon learn to avoid the poisonous lakes these creatures inhabit). A few prefer to live near weakly defended civilized areas, or at least ones near major rivers that lead to these places, to assure plenty of human or humanoid prey and the domestic animals associated with them. Unlike dragons, swamp wyrms eat frequently, destroying all wildlife, and they are sometimes considered more of a problem than certain dragons are.

Swamp wyrms rest at the top of their local food chain, but they actively destroy the local ecology around their lakes and ravage the wildlife nearby. Adventurers and large monsters are their only true enemies, but most swamp wyrms live where neither foe is in great supply. Numerous uses have been rumored for their body parts, particularly the many glands under their scales that give off the water-affecting secretion.

Lindworm

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Variable (see text)*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *Carnivore*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low (5-7)*

TREASURE: *B*

ALIGNMENT: *Variable, but always evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1 (20% of 2)*

ARMOR CLASS: *Variable (see text)*

MOVEMENT: *12*

HIT DICE: *5*

THACO: *15*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *3*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-8/1-6/2-12*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to attacks similar to those of breath weapon*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

SIZE: *H (20' long)*

MORALE: *Steady (11)*

XP VALUE: *650*

The lindworm is a deficient form of evil dragon, one that may be born to a black, blue, green, red, or white dragon. This may be due to a curse of the gods or simply nature's way of insuring that the population of true dragons doesn't grow too large. Either way, the lindworm, while formidable, is not nearly as dangerous as a regular dragon. It looks like a two-legged dragon, rather like a wyvern, but without wings or the wyvern's poison stinger. The lindworm has a typically draconic head and long neck, but the creature's body is built like that of a huge scaly bird. Its color and other details of its appearance are similar to those of its parents.

Combat: The lindworm has three physical attacks: a bite (1-8 hp), a clawing attack (1-6 hp; only one clawing attack can be made, since the lindworm must have one leg to stand on), and a tail lash (1-12 hp). No lindworm can cast spells, but they do

inherit their parents' breath weapon, which has only half the physical dimensions of the usual form and does 5d8 hp damage (half if a successful save vs. breath weapons is made). The breath attack may be used three times a day. All lindworms are also immune to attack forms similar to those of their breath weapons (e.g., fire and heat for the lindworm spawn of red dragons). As a final defense, the lindworm's armor class is equal to the parent dragon's base armor class.

Habitat/Society: Lindworms are the result of a dragon couple's breeding failures (one appearing every 100 births), and as such they are quickly driven forth from the den. Eighty percent of the time, only one lindworm is encountered; otherwise, there are twins. Because they are effectively banished from draconic society, lindworms are extremely vicious, selfish, bitter creatures seeking revenge on the world. Twins are quite loyal to each other, as each is the only creature in the world that provides companionship for the other. If one is killed or injured, the other attacks with no thought for its own life (Morale 20). They speak their parents' natural tongue only, but rarely speak before or instead of attacking. Lindworms have no true society, despising even each other unless they are twins.

Continued on page 32



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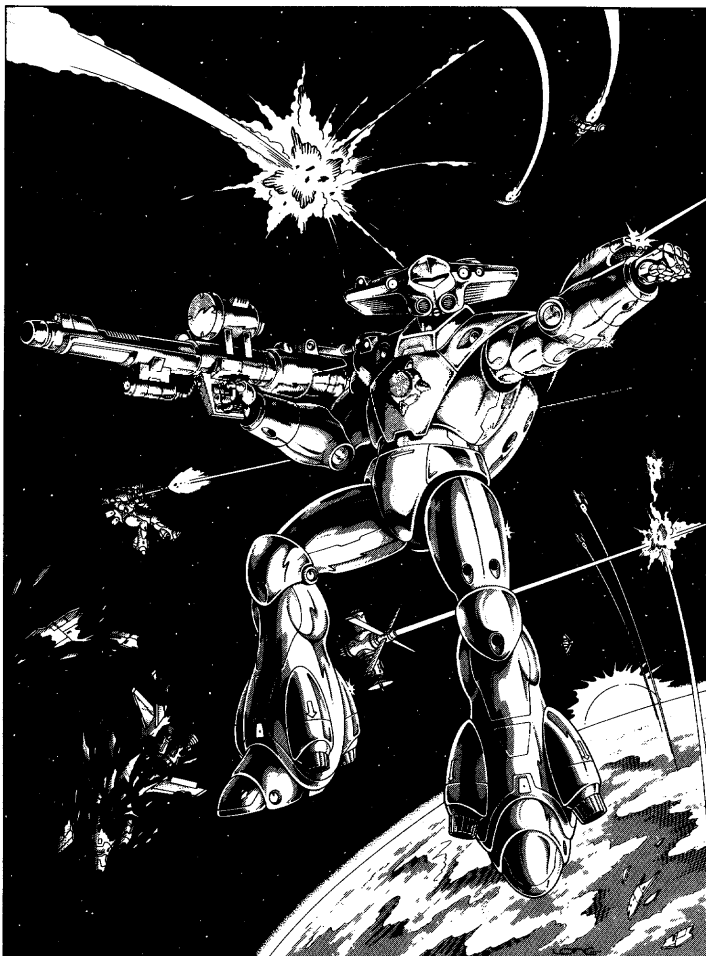
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by Skip Williams

SAGE advice

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

This month, our sage addresses more AD&D® DARK SUN™ campaign questions, then "re-sages" two past questions.

Were templars, gladiators, rangers, bards, and psionicists deliberately left off the multiclassed character table? If a multiclassed demihuman were a gladiator/ranger, would he add the extra weapon attacks he gets from his gladiator level and weapon specialization to the two attacks he gets each round as a ranger?

Take a closer look at the rules and table on pages 38-39 of the DARK SUN Rules Book. Several psionicist combinations are listed there. If you check the notes immediately following the multiclassed table on page 39, you'll see that the templar, ranger, and bard can be substituted for the cleric, fighter, and thief, respectively, in most cases. Gladiators cannot be part of a multiclass combination. No fighter/fighter combinations exist; no combinations list a major class more than once, because no character in any AD&D game setting can use subclasses of the same class in a multi- or dual-classed combination.

If you have a taste for really far-out variants, fine, but don't bring the problems they create to "Sage Advice." However, since you've gotten me started, note that rangers don't get two attacks a round. What rangers get is the ability to use a secondary weapon without penalty. A secondary weapon gives a character exactly *one* extra attack each round. Multiple attacks from level or specialization apply only to the primary weapon. Of course, a haste spell and similar magicks do grant double the normal number of attacks. In this case, the character gets two attacks with the secondary weapon and twice his normal allotment of attacks with the primary weapon.

Can templars cast quest spells? Can defilers and preservers opt to become wild mages? How are the new clerical spheres from the *Tome of Magic* used on Athas?

Under the right circumstances, templars, druids, and elemental priests can get quest spells. The section on quest spells in the *Tome of Magic* (pages 10-13) gives guidelines for helping the DM decide what the right circumstances are.

Both preservers and defilers can become wild mages.

The newly released *Dragon Kings* hard-bound book for the DARK SUN campaign contains complete information on integrating the *Tome of Magic's* new spheres into DARK SUN campaigns.

What do priests on Athas use for holy symbols?

This is up to the DM. Templars probably use their badge of office or their sorcerer's seal. Elemental priests might use the Athasian symbol for their element; Tim Brown, one of the designers of the DARK SUN boxed set, points out that the rules for turning undead on Athas (*Rules Book*, page 70) seem to suggest that a small quantity of the priest's element might suffice as a holy symbol. Druids might use pieces of foliage, chunks of stone, or handfuls of dirt from their guarded lands.

Can Athasian psionicists have wild talents?

No. Nor can psionicists on any other AD&D game world. Psionicists enjoy the full range of their profession's psychic powers instead of having wild talents.

Why can't thri-kreen wear magical rings and cloaks? Can they wear magical boots and gauntlets?

Thri-kreen can wear rings, cloaks, boots, and gauntlets, but only if the items are made to fit thri-kreen; see the *Rules Book*, page 16. Items made for humans or demihumans just don't fit thri-kreen, as such items either are too small or are entirely the wrong shape.

The Racial Ability Requirements table (*Rules Book*, page 3) allows no scores lower than 5 or higher than 20. However, the Racial Ability Adjustments section (same page) says

no adjusted score can be lower than 3 or higher than 24. Can racial adjustments alter the initial limits?

The "limits" on Athas are a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 24. The Racial Ability Requirements table does not denote limits. A new character must have scores that fall within the listed range of the Racial Ability Requirements table before any racial adjustments are applied (*Rules Book*, page 3, last line under the heading "Minimum and Maximum Ability Scores" and note the word "before" in boldface type).

What are the per-round movement rates for the various Athasian races? The *Rules Book* only gives overland movement rates.

The rates are as follows: human, 12; dwarf, 6; elf 12, half-elf, 12, half-giant 15, halfling, 6; mul, 12; thri-kreen, 18.

How far can a mul or thri-kreen move in a 20-hour marching day?

These races get double movement points if they go the full 20 hours (for muls, 48 or 60 on a forced march; for thri-kreen, 72 or 90 on a forced march). Check out the overland movement rules in the *Rules Book*, pages 87-88, for details.

Do Athasian elves automatically receive the Running proficiency?

No, but they can add their constitution scores to their daily overland movement rates. It is this ability, not a universal running proficiency, that accounts for their legendary overland speed. Note that this ability is generally safer and more reliable than the Running proficiency because it does not require a proficiency check or impose a combat penalty (*Player's Handbook*, page 63).

Do Athasian dwarves have infravision? I can't find a reference to it anywhere in the DARK SUN rules.

I can't find it either. This was an oversight due to some lost text. Athasian elves do have infravision (*Rules Book*, page 6). I suggest giving 60' infravision to Athasian dwarves, half-elves, and halflings.

When you first build a character tree, are all the characters third level?

Yes. At the start of play, all single-classed PCs are 3rd level and multiclassed PCs are 2nd level in the most "expensive" class. However, inactive characters added to a tree to replace slain characters always start at 1st level. Note that any inactive character on a tree can gain levels according to the rules on page 41 of the *Rules Book*. The point of having a character tree is to give the player a stable of replacement characters who are better than 1st level, not to take *all* the sting out of character death. Smart players will manage their character trees so their inactive characters reach 3rd level as quickly as possible.

I have a player who's constantly after me to allow his character to acquire a chemistry or alchemy proficiency. This seems pretty high-brow to me, especially on a planet where a magnifying glass is regarded as a mysterious type of magic. What would a chemistry or alchemy proficiency do on an AD&D game world, anyway?

Generally, Athasians are a pretty sharp lot. While the introductory tale "A Little Knowledge" (by Jerry Olition) includes a character who is mystified by a chunk of glass, this is far from the norm. As Tim Brown (Lake Geneva's DARK SUN world martinet) points out, most Athasians, with their exposure to elemental priestly magic and their survival skills, have more knowledge about the way their world works than common folk in most places.

Still, exact sciences such as chemistry are all but unknown in the magical worlds of the AD&D game. Chemistry is replaced by alchemy, which is a complex and esoteric art that is much better suited to sages (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 106-108) than to adventurers who spend their time and intellectual energy learning character-class abilities. In any case, alchemy is too complex to be covered in a single proficiency. I suppose a true alchemist might have nonweapon proficiencies in Brewing, Astrology, Herbalism, Mineralogy, Spellcraft, Engineering, and, optionally, Pottery or Glassblowing (a previously undescribed proficiency). The character would have to use his combined knowledge of all these subjects to tackle any particular problem.

Does the Water Find proficiency allow a half-giant to locate four gallons of water? Can a thri-kreen give the water he finds with the Water Find proficiency to other characters?

No character who successfully uses the Water Find proficiency suffers a constitution loss due to dehydration (*Rules Book*, page 46). This does not necessarily mean that the character actually finds his full daily requirement of water, which varies according to the character's race, armor, and level of activity. In fact, since Water Find does not allow a character to rehydrate, it's pretty clear that the character

usually finds something less than a full day's supply. As for giving away any water found, there's no reason to assume the character actually finds drinkable water; the proficiency might yield just a trickle of liquid water and several mouthfuls of soggy cactus pulp. While half-giants and thri-kreen might be able to choke down many different forms of nonliquid water, not every character can. I suggest that you place some limit on the amount of water actually available for sharing, say 1d4 + 1 pints. Note also that thri-kreen usually have better things to do with their non-weapon proficiency slots that spend them on Water Find, since they need so little water (*DARK SUN Rules Book*, page 86).

Do merchant houses do any buying or selling at their headquarters? Are goods and coins the only forms of payment accepted at merchant emporiums?

Only members or agents of a merchant house are allowed to enter a house's headquarters; this precludes normal transactions between the house and ordinary customers. I suppose that very special deals with other houses or special customers might be negotiated inside the headquarters, but only if extra security is necessary to keep rival merchant houses from getting wind of the deal and only if no city laws are being broken (no merchant house would ever run the risk of having its headquarters raided by the local templars).

As far as methods of payment go, nothing beats cash or bartered goods in the hand, especially on Athas, where it is very easy to go into the desert and either deliberately disappear to avoid a debt or accidentally fall victim to the planet's many dangers. Either way, the merchant is out his goods and probably will become a laughing stock to boot. Some merchants might be willing to grant credit or accept services in lieu of cash or goods on the spot, but only if the terms are very favorable to the merchant and the buyer is either extremely famous or a trusted, long-time customer.

I don't understand the weapons chart on page 53 of the Rules Book. It looks like the column headings should be moved over one space, but if you do that, where does the "Damage" heading go?

This is the kind of typo that gives rules editors ulcers. Most of the column headers are one column too far left and should be shifted one column to the right. The "Damage" heading actually goes above the last two columns, which are "S-M" and "L" for the damage done by weapons to beings of different sizes. The columns should read: Weapon name [no heading actually used], Cost, Wt [weight in pounds], Size, Type, Speed [for modifying initiative rolls; see PH, page 94], [Damage] S-M, and [Damage] L.

What are the range categories and rate of fire for the chatkcha?

Generally, the AD&D game divides missile ranges into thirds, so short range for the chatkcha (with a maximum range of 90 yards) should be 30 yards or less, medium 31-60 yards, and long 61-90 yards. I suggest the rate of fire be one each round, the same as a hand axe.

I pretty much understand how to calculate how many Psionic Strength Points a character with a wild talent gets. But how many PSPs does a character with more than one wild psionic talent have? And what do you do with talents where the PSP cost to establish or maintain the power varies?

To assign PSPs to a character with a wild psionic talent, use the procedure described on page 20 of *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. When a power has a variable PSP cost, the character gets PSPs equal to the minimum cost to establish and maintain the power. For example, a character with the wild talent of Domination gets 27 PSPs for that power (3 PSPs is the minimum cost to use the power once, plus the minimum maintenance cost of 6 PSPs, times four). If the character has more than one power, he gets the full allotment of PSPs for *each* power. That is, determine how many PSPs the character would get for each power, then add them together to get the character's actual PSP total. Note that a character with multiple wild talents still gets only four extra PSPs for each experience level gained.

What do you do with talents that have prerequisites? Are these like college courses in that you must have all the prerequisites before you can have the talent in question?

To get a power with prerequisites, a character must have all the prerequisites before gaining the power. In college, you sometimes can get the prerequisites waived; that never happens for PCs. However, characters frequently can be granted all a power's prerequisites along with the power. This is always the case with newly gained wild talents. For instance, the character with Domination in the previous example automatically would have both Mindlink and Contact (the character also would get extra PSPs for those prerequisite powers).

What happens when a DARK SUN character has ability scores so high that the character's psionic power scores are 20 or higher—for example, a character with a wisdom of 22 using the contact power (where the power score is equal to the character's wisdom score)?

A roll of 20 is always a failure when using a psionic power (*TCPH*, page 11), and it might also carry other penalties. In theory, a character with a power score of

more than 20 cannot take advantage of the "skill score" optional rule (TCPH, page 11, and page 28, "Optional Results") since you can't roll an unmodified 21 or higher on 1d20. Kind referees might allow such characters to have an effective score of 19 for purposes of using the "skill score" rule.

Some of the animals listed on the chart for the Animal Affinity psionic power (TCPH, page 50) don't fit the DARK SUN setting. How many sharks, barracuda, or crocodiles are there on Athas? How about an alternate table?

There are no sharks, barracuda, or crocodiles on Athas. (According to Tim Brown, there never were any on Athas; the planet's flora and fauna are vastly different from what is found on other AD&D game worlds.) Still, there probably were creatures like them on Athas at one time or another, and I don't see any real problem with using the table just as it is. If you want to give this power a true Athasian flavor, get out your *Wanderer's Journal* and your *Monstrous Compendium* DARK SUN Appendix and make a few substitutions. Here's an unofficial list: rasclinn for barracuda, kank or wild kank soldier for crocodile, athasian sloth for elephant, jozhal for percheron (draft horse), and megapede for shark. I'll stop there and assume the other animals have Athasian equivalents.

Since thri-kreen don't sleep, how do they regain PSPs or spells?

In pretty much the same way other characters do. To regain spells, a thri-kreen must be at rest, as inactive as a sleeping character would be, and must maintain this state for as long as any other spell-caster would have to sleep. Thri-kreen regain PSPs at the rates given in the TCPH, page 14, Table 6. To regain PSPs at the sleeping rate, a thri-kreen must be completely inactive as described above. Note that the psionist's Rejuvenation proficiency isn't particularly useful to thri-kreen.

Since defiler magic is easier to use than preserver magic, can a preserver opt to use it in appropriate circumstances, such as while standing in a sorcerer-king's garden? Since defiler magic is a simpler, cruder form of magic, is alignment the only thing that keeps a preserver from using it?

Defiler magic is not available to preservers under any circumstances. A preserver learns to craft spells so the energy they require is replaced rather than simply being drained from the land. This element of balance is integral to all a preserver's spells and cannot be deliberately omitted. I suppose a preserver could switch to defiler magic; in such cases, however, the character would have to effectively switch classes so that all subse-

quent spells would be of the defiler type. How such a switch might be accomplished — if it is possible at all — is entirely up to the DM.

The rules describe the preserver and defiler classes in just about every detail except one: spell progression. The rules say that defilers get spells more quickly than preservers, but nowhere do the rules give a spell progression table for either class!

Both classes use the spell progression table for wizards in the *Players Handbook*, page 30. The rules do not say that defilers get spells faster than preservers, but page 26 of the *Rules Book* does point out that defilers advance through the levels very quickly. A comparison of the defiler experience table from page 27 of the *Rules Book* with the standard wizard experience table (PH, page 30), which preservers use, will bear this out.

If an Athasian wizard has his spell books destroyed or taken away, can he get new ones?

Yes. The minimum cost of doing this is listed in the spell books section of the DMG (page 42). The DM might also assign additional costs and time requirements. Check out the following sections of the DMG for guidelines: spell research (pages

43-44), scroll research (page 41), and scroll creation (pages 85-87). Note that all sorcerer-kings consider magic treasonous, which makes recreating spell books inside cities pretty dangerous. Being a member of a veiled alliance would be a great boon to a wizard attempting to recreate lost spell books.

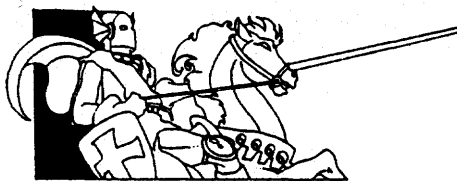
When, exactly, does a half-giant change alignment? The section on half-giants on pages 9-11 of the Rules Book says a half-giant must choose an alignment each morning (page 10). The section on half-giants and alignment on page 42 also starts out saying half-giants must choose an alignment each morning, but in the same paragraph it also says a half-giant may change alignment each morning, but change isn't mandatory.

I'll admit that there's a bit of a semantic trap in the rules governing the shifting alignments of half-giants. While half-giants truly must choose an alignment each morning, they are free to "choose" the same alignment they have been following. A change in alignment is optional and occurs only when the DM and the player agree that the prevailing circumstances make it possible. In other words, a player with a half-giant character should consider what has happened to the character each

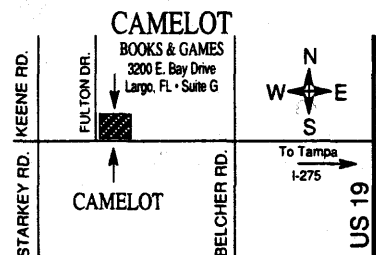
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day and decide if the character's alignment should shift. If, for example, the predominantly good party the character has been adventuring with falls into a squabble over water or treasure, the DM and the player might decide it's time to shift the half-giant's alignment toward the chaotic or evil end of the spectrum. Remember, half-giants are inveterate imitators; they follow where their companions and neighbors lead, but their alignments don't shift without reason.

Exactly how long does a piece of land remain barren after a defiler turns it to ash?

Nothing will grow in the area for at least one full year, but it usually takes much more time than that, perhaps decades, for the area to fully recover; some areas never recover (*Rules Book*, page 61). Exact recovery time is up to the DM.

On the experience table (*Rules Book*, page 63), do fighters get 10 XP per level, per hit die, per creature, per battle, or per their own level for opponents defeated? What do thieves get?

All characters get experience for defeating opponents according to the rules in the *DMG*, pages 46-47. When a fighter single-handedly defeats an opponent, the DM might decide to award *extra* experience under the Individual Experience Awards optional rule (*DMG*, page 48). The award for fighters is 10 XP times the defeated opponent's level or hit dice, times the fighter's level. The award for bards is only 5 XP times the defeated opponent's level or hit dice.

What is the terrain cost for roads on Athas?

This depends on the individual roads construction and present condition. I suggest you use the terrain modifier for the prevailing terrain $\times \frac{1}{2}$, with a minimum cost of 1. For example, using a road to traverse stony barrens is 1; using a road to cross salt flats also is 1, as the surface on any road on Athas isn't going to be much smoother than a salt flat. Note that you can't get lost while traveling on a road (even if you aren't exactly sure where you're going).

How many globs of honey will a kank produce each day?

This is up to the DM, but I recommend that a well-fed, food-producing, domestic kank secrete no more than one glob each day. Note that not all kanks are food producers. The rules don't give ratios, but I suggest that only half of any group of kanks be food producers. Of the remainder, one will be the brood queen and the rest will be soldiers, none of which produce honey. Note also that brooding kanks produce honey for their offspring, and the young kanks will eat a substantial portion of the honey, say 20%-60%, before charac-

ters can harvest it. Characters who try to keep the young kanks from the honey are likely to have a fight on their hands, the domestic kank's reputation for docility notwithstanding.

I am formulating plans to have my spelljamming group touch down on Athas. How would Athasians react to the appearance of a spelljammer? Would "normal" wizards cast preserver or defiler magic?

As "Sage Advice" pointed out in issue #178, spelljammers cannot reach Athas. Exactly why this is so is unrevealed, but the prevailing theory is that Athas is not located inside a crystal sphere but on an alternate Prime Material plane where spelljamming devices don't work.

I suspect that wildspacefaring characters would not find Athas a welcoming place at any rate. While common folk might not be any more suspicious of spacefarers than they are of any other strangers, sorcerer-kings are a different matter. Once these tyrants realize what spelljamming is and what it can do, they're going to ruthlessly attack, not giving up until the spacefarers flee the planet or are killed or enslaved. (Of course, such an attack could begin disguised as a friendly overture.) A single spelljamming ship, even at atmospheric speeds, would be an invaluable fighting and exploration platform on Athas. No sorcerer-king would allow one to exist unless it was firmly under his control.

Since preserver magic uses the same rules as "normal" magic, I think it's safe to assume that a plane-hopping wizard who finds himself on Athas would have preserver spells. I suppose such a wizard could learn the local "shortcuts" and become a defiler, but that's up to the DM.

Re-saging: I have received several letters about an answer that appeared in issue #175. AD&D® 2nd. Edition game characters gain bonus proficiency slots if they have high intelligence scores, and a reader asked if these bonus slots could be assigned to both weapon and nonweapon proficiencies. I said I believed the extra slots can be assigned only to nonweapon proficiencies.

A number of readers have correctly pointed out that *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* contains a passage that clearly states the extra slots can be assigned to both types of proficiencies (page 58). However, when I answered the question, I assumed the reader who asked it didn't have *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. Note that everything in the various *Complete Handbooks* is strictly optional; generally speaking, I recommend that you do not allow bonus proficiency slots to be used for weapon proficiencies. On the other hand, if you have *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* and want to make full use of all the goodies therein, you probably *do* want to let warriors use their bonus slots on weapon proficiencies. I

strongly recommend that you limit this ability to warriors only, unless you're prepared to deal with 1st-level wizards who want proficiency in eight weapons (or more than eight if you've got a campaign set in the DARK SUN world).

I have also recently received a letter regarding this column in issue #167, in which I flatly said all spells of the Divination school were off-limits to conjurers (wizards specializing in the Conjunction/Summoning school). I goofed. The section on spell schools in the *Player's Handbook* (page 31, top of the third column) makes it clear that first- through fourth-level Divinations are available to all wizards. This gives conjurers access to such vital spells as *read magic*. Ω

Dragon's Bestiary

Continued from page 27

Ecology: The lindworm has no ingrained hunting technique, having to learn through trial and error. (Even if dragons knew how to kill through instinct instead of being taught by their parents, the lindworm's lack of wings and forelimbs would make this knowledge useless.) All lindworm hunting methods are essentially variants on the ambush: hiding in thick brush or woods, waiting behind boulders, sitting submerged in murky water, or burying itself in sand or snow (depending on the lindworm's parentage and environment). Lindworms eat anything they can catch and are almost always hungry, a state that only adds to their generally bad dispositions. They don't value treasure for its own sake as their parents do, but often leave the spoils of a previous hunt as bait for intelligent prey.

Though dangerous, lindworms are often deposited from the top of the local food chain by even more dangerous predators. Dragons who were not their birth parents will willingly slay them out of hand, without eating the bodies; other powerful monsters find them to be interesting prey, and adventurers regularly reduce their ranks. Wizards have yet to find a use for lindworm parts.

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NOVEL

I • D • E • A • S

by James "Latislav" Lowder

More grim tales from the Domains of Dread



TSR's fearless authors will be returning to the gothic fantasy RAVENLOFT™ campaign setting for two novels in 1992. Both *Dance of the Dead* and *Heart of Midnight* break new ground for the book line, with

stories set in the domains of Souragne and Kartakass.

Dance of the Dead, available in July, reveals some of the fantastic secrets of Souragne, the island realm of zombie lord, Anton Misroi. RAVENLOFT novel veteran Christie Golden—of *Vampire of the Mists*

fame—spins the tale of Larissa Snowmane, a dancer aboard a magical riverboat. When the boat arrives at the undead-plagued island of Souragne, she finds herself dancing to chilling music indeed. To save her won soul, she must confront Souragne's evil master and learn the darkly powerful Dance of the Dead.

Golden, whose first novel was confined to the well-detailed domain of Barovia, was happy to explore a new part of the RAVENLOFT world. Its wide range of settings and characters is especially ap-

pealing to her.

"Ravenloft is a dream come true for fantasy and horror writers. These are two of my favorite genres, and I really enjoy working on tales that combine them. It's a place of staggering variety—of characters, geography, and cultures. Look at what kind of beings it's 'peopled' with: high-born wererats in a French-influenced realm, gothic heroes and monsters inspired by British literature, riverboating werewolves, poisoners, liches, and gypsy sorceresses. This sort of thing is a gold mine for writers. There's plenty in the RAVENLOFT setting to fuel many more novels full of richly developed characters and terrifying events."

Golden drew upon her own background as a dancer for her depiction of Larissa's artistic skills. Other inspirations for *Dance of the Dead* include such wildly varied elements as musical theater, Southern folklore, voodoo tales, Creole cooking, *Peter Pan*, and *Watership Down*. The resulting novel, though, is true to the RAVENLOFT setting's vision—equal helpings of fantasy and gothic horror.

Keeping a suitably grim tone for *Dance of the Dead* proved difficult for Golden, even though she's written in the series before. The hardest thing for Golden was to remember the constraints of the RAVENLOFT setting. "[T]hat means rotten things happen to the characters you like. The urge for an unequivocally happy ending was difficult to curb sometimes."

J. Robert King, author of *Heart of Midnight*, agrees that the dark, gloomy nature of the RAVENLOFT world presents a serious challenge to the series' writers, who must spend hours upon hours thinking about the land and its unfortunate inhabitants. "When I finished writing and my wife finished reading *Heart of Midnight*, we both felt a desperate need for light and air and levity."

King is quick to note, however, that the very thing that makes RAVENLOFT novels difficult to write is also their greatest strength.

"The RAVENLOFT world is TSR's best stage for tragedy," King points out. "In the other shared worlds—the FORGOTTEN REALMS® and DRAGONLANCE® settings, especially—good usually triumphs, and that victory provides the emotional satisfaction you feel when you finish the book. In the RAVENLOFT setting, that catharsis comes from experiencing the tragic fate that most often befalls the main character."

Heart of Midnight, on sale in December, certainly provides a story of a tragic doom. The story centers on Casimir, who inherits his fathers lycanthropic curse even before he's born. Though he fights against the curse of the werewolf, he must eventually embrace his dark powers to ward off a murderer and gain revenge upon his monstrous father. Yet any triumph Casimir achieves may well lead to his destruction; in Kartakass, no powerful creature long escapes the notice of the

villainous darklord, Harkon Lukas.

Like *Dance of the Dead*, King's novel has its roots in a wide variety of sources, some classical and some not.

"*Heart of Midnight* draws its inspiration from stories of temptation and corruption. *Paradise Lost* and *Faust* provided templates for Harkon Lukas's character, especially as it relates to the seduction of Casimir. Also, I drew upon dramas of fatal indecision, like *Hamlet*, for Casimir's friend, Thoris. The tragic and tormented monster from *Frankenstein* surely influenced the character of Casimir himself, as did the novel *Grendel*."

When pressed, King admits with a laugh that all the sources for *Heart of Midnight* are not so high-brow. "Well, to be completely honest, the soul of the book owes just as much to old black-and-white horror films, such as *The Invisible Man*, *The*

Hunchback of Notre Dame, and *Dracula*."

After *Heart of Midnight*, King will plunge right back into the domains of the RAVENLOFT world. His next book, *Carnival of Fear*, will be released in the summer of 1993. Spring 1993 will see the release of *Tapestry of Dark Souls*, by Elaine Bergstrom, author of the excellent vampire novels *Blood Rites*, *Shattered Glass*, and *Blood Alone* for Berkley. Finally, 1993 also promises the start of the Ebonacht Trilogy; the first book in the series, *The Screaming Tower*, ships at the end of the year. It's written by some guy named Jim Lowder, the same one who penned *Knight of the Black Rose*.

So close the shutters and bar the door, get out your wolfsbane and garlic, then gather around so these intrepid storytellers can share their visions of the Dark Domains with you. Ω

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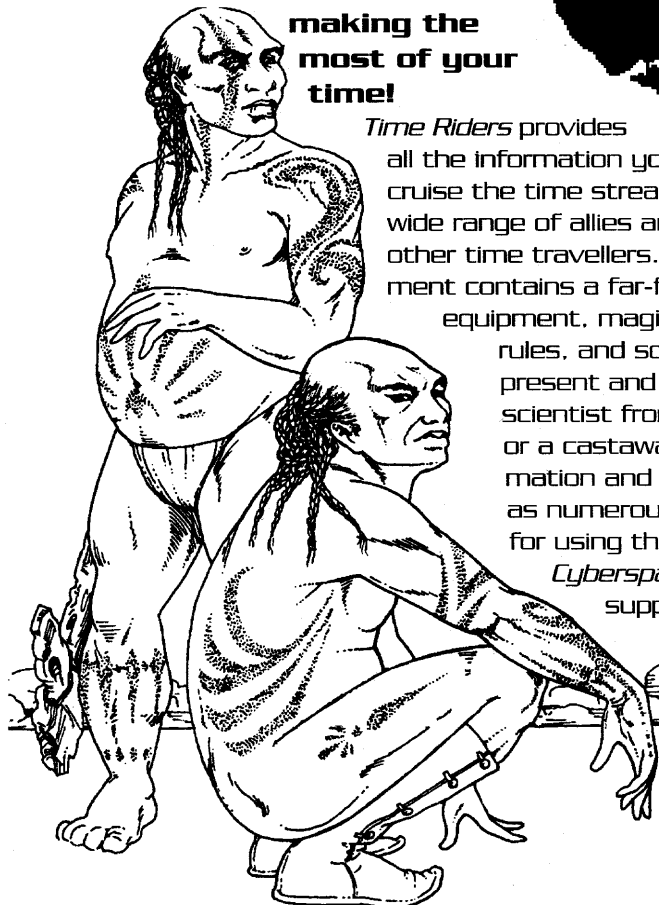
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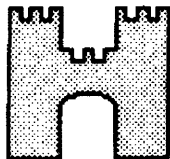


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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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MOBI-CON '92, June 12-14 AL

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Days Inn in Mobile, Ala. Proceeds will benefit the Penelope House shelter for abused women and children. Guests include Margaret Weis and comics artists. Activities include writing workshops, an art show and auction, miniatures painting, a dealers' room, a costume contest, seminars, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$13.50/weekend before June 1; \$16/weekend at the door. Single-day rates vary. Write to: MOBI-CON INC., P.O. Box 161257, Mobile AL 36616.

ST. JOSEPH VALLEY GAMERS CON '92 June 12-13 IN

This convention will be held at the IUSB campus in South Bend, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ tournament and role-playing, board, and historical- and fantasy-miniatures games. Other activities include demo games, a flea market, a dealers' area, raffles, contests, and door prizes. For more information and costs, send an SASE to: St. Joseph Valley gamers, 121 W. Colfax, South Bend IN 46601.

CONFIGURATION HI, June 13-14 OK

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Events include AD&D®, D&D®, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS®, VAMPIRE®, SHADOWRUN®, and STAR TREK® tournaments, with board-game tournaments, historical miniatures games, open gaming, and a video room. Registration: \$4/weekend preregistered; \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: CONFIGURATION, 3617 E. 24th St., Tulsa OK 74115; or call Mike at: (918) 836-8008.

MADISON GAMES DAY IV, June 14 WI

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include RPGs, war games, miniatures battles, and a games auction. Other activities include a dealers' area. Dealers are welcome. Registration: \$5, with no game fees. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-GAME.

ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR, June 19-21 GA

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Atlanta Airport and the Georgia Convention & Trade Center. Guests include Peter Bromley, Ann Goetz, Beverly Hale, and Mike Moe. Write to: Atlanta Fantasy Fair, 4175 Eliza Ct., Lithonia GA 30058; or call: (404) 985-1230.

GLASSCON '92, June 20-21 NJ

Note: This convention was previously listed as taking place on May 30-31. The convention dates have since been changed to those listed above. This convention will be held on the campus of Glassboro State College in Glassboro, N.J. Events include RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournaments, plus AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, KINGMAKER®, DIPLOMACY®, and GURPS® games. Other activities include board and war games and a dealers' area. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered, or \$7/Sat. and \$5/Sun. Preregistered (fees at the door will be higher). Events costs are \$1/time slot. Write to: GLASSCON, P.O. Box 58, Wind Gap PA 18091-0058. Proceeds will go to the Center for Exceptional Children at Glassboro State College.

ORGANIZED KHAN-FUSION IV June 20-21 PA

This convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Activities include AD&D® games, a railroad tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and over 50 gaming events. Registration fees vary from \$6-10. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or talk (717) 774-6676.

ARCON 8, June 26-28 ✿

This convention will be held in the Vilhelm Bjerknes building of the University of Oslo in Oslo, Norway. Events include AD&D® championship tournaments, with CALL OF CTHULHU®, MERP®, PARANOIA®, ROLEMASTER®, RUNE-QUEST®, SHADOWRUN®, TORC®, and WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY® games. Other activities include board-game tournaments, a miniatures-painting competition, WWII miniatures games, and movies. Registration: NOK 125 by IMO until June 13; NOK 175 at the door. Write to: ARCON, P.O. Box 46, Blindern, N-0314 Oslo, NORWAY; or call Geir Aalberg at: +47-2-56-39-45.

LEGACY '92, June 26-28 TX

This convention will be held at the Comfort Inn Convention Center in Arlington, Tex. Events include the MechForce Southwest Regional BATTLETECH® tournament, gaming, speakers, miniatures-painting contests, a movie room, a dealers' area, and an auction. Special hotel rates are available. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered. Write to: LEGACY '92, 1604 Canfield No. 1107, Ft. Worth TX 76120; or call our 24-hour hotline: (214)601-9032 and enter 6552#.

POLYCON X, June 26-28 CA

This gaming convention will be held at the Embassy Suites hotel, in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

- ✧ i indicates an Australian convention.
- * i indicates a Canadian convention.
- ✿ i indicates a European convention.

Guests include Loyd Blankenship, Tom Dowd, Scott Haring, and Mike Stackpole. Activities include game showcases, seminars, games, a writers' workshop, an art gallery, an auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. For more information and costs, write to: P.O. Box 4526, San Luis Obispo CA 93403.

CAPITAL CON VIII, June 27-28 IL

This convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Activities include RPGA™ Network tournaments; role-playing, board, computer, and miniatures games; a miniatures-painting contest; and a game auction. Registration: \$10/weekend, including game costs. Write to: CAPITAL CON VIII, c/o Tom Lawrence, 2557 Somerton Rd., Springfield IL 62702.

GALAXY FAIR '92/ARTCON IV July 2-5 TX

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Park Central hotel in Dallas, Tex. Guests include Diane Duane, Alan Gutierrez, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, David Cherry, P. N. Elrod, Bill Fawcett, Jody Lynn Nye, and Robert Asprin. Activities include a short-story contest, a masquerade, an art show, writers' and artists' workshops, seminars, and exhibits. Registration: \$25 preregistered, or \$30 at the door. Write to: GALAXY FAIR, P.O. Box 150471, Arlington TX 76015-6471; or call: (817) 467-0681.

ATLANTICON '92, July 3-5 MD

This gaming convention, presented by ADF, Inc., will be held on the University of Maryland campus in College Park, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$16/weekend preregistered; \$22/weekend or \$10/day at the door. Write to: ADF Inc., P.O. Box 91, Beltsville MD 20704-0091; or call: (301) 345-1858.

KINGCON '92, July 3-5 OH

Hosted by the Royal Gaming Society of Dayton, this convention will be held at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with AD&D®, GURPS®, PENDRAGON®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, RUNE-QUEST®, PARANOIA®, and ROLEMASTER® games. Other activities include DIPLOMACY®, STRATEGO®, TALISMAN®, AXIS & ALLIES®, and BATTLETECH® games, plus historical, fantasy, and SF miniatures games. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$15 at the door. Write to: P.O. Box 31174, Dayton OH 45431; or call: (513) 223-8973.

NANCON XIV, July 3-5 TX

This convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel Northwest in Houston, Tex. Events include D&D®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, BATTLETECH®, BLOOD BOWL®, and AXIS & ALLIES® games, with historical miniatures games, a dealers' room, fan-club rooms, seminars, Japanimation, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend, single-day rates are available. Send an SASE to: Nan's Games & Comics, Too!, 2011 Southwest Freeway (U.S. 59), Houston TX 77098-4805; or call: (713) 520-8700 from noon to 9 P.M. CST.

ALOHA CON '92, July 4 HI

This convention will be held at Webster Hall on the campus of the University of Hawaii. Events include role-playing and war games. For more information and costs, send an SASE to: Jim Haynes, 720 Morton Dr. #117, Honolulu HI 96819.

III-KHAN, July 10-12 CO

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. The guest of

honor is Christopher Stasheff. Events include AD&D®, SPACE HULK®, CAR WARS®, SKY GAL LEONS OF MARS®, BATTLECH®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® tournaments, with a movie room, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, an art show, and open gaming. Registration: \$15 before June 30; \$20 thereafter. There will be a \$1/game fee. Write to: Miniatures Wargamers' Guild, 7040 S. Hwy 85-87, Fountain CO 80817; or call Perry at: (719) 391-8318.

DOVERCON VIII, July 11-12 NH

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. The special guest is Steve Jackson. Activities include RPGA™ Network tournaments, RPGs, war games, seminars, miniatures and art competitions, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered, \$20/weekend at the door; \$12 Saturday only, \$8 Sunday only. Write to: DOVERCON VIII, P.O. Box 753, Dover NH 03820.

DRAGON CON '92, July 17-19 GA

This convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Georgia. Guests include Raymond E. Feist, George R. R. Martin, Forrest J. Ackerman, L. Sprague de Camp, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Phil Foglio, Ralph Bakshi, Denis Beauvais, Robert Anton Wilson, Dr. Timothy Leary, John Byrne, Chris Claremont, Lynn Abbey, Richard Garriott, and Erick Wujcik. Activities include every sort of gaming, with panels, seminars, a writers' workshop, an art show and print shop, anime, videos, dances, robot battles, demos, costumes, a hospitality suite, and consignment game auctions. Registration: \$30/weekend before June 15; \$35/weekend at the door (RPGA™ Network discounts available). Send a long SASE to: DRAGON CON '92, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362-0696; or call our 24-hour information line at: (404) 925-2813.

ECONOMYCON VI, July 17-19 AZ

This convention will be held at the Campus Village West Shopping Center in Phoenix, Ariz. GMs: Come and run your board, miniatures, or role-playing game. Prizes will be awarded to the best GMs. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest and door prizes. Registration: Free. Call the Roaming Panther Game Company at: (602) 820-2083 or (602) 547-0239.

MEMPHIS FANTASY CON '92 July 17-19 TN

This convention will be held at the downtown Radisson hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Guests include Walter Jon Williams, Steven Brust, and Bart Sears. Activities include an art room, a dealers' room, an art auction, a costume contest, and gaming. For more information and costs, write to: MEMPHIS FANTASY CON, 4730 Poplar #2, Memphis TN 38117; or call direct, days: (901) 683-7171; nights: (901) 385-0088.

QUINCON VII, July 17-19 IL

This gaming convention will be held at the Days Inn in Quincy, Ill. Events include fantasy and historical miniatures games, RPGs, board games, and RPGA™ tournaments. Guests include Jean Rabe and Lester Smith. Registration: \$5/day or \$12/weekend. Special room rates are available. Send an SASE to: QUINCON VII, c/o Quincy Hobby Center, 3632 Maine St., Quincy IL 62301.

CONGENIAL IV, July 24-26 WI

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Guests include Michael

Kube-McDowell and Jeanne Mealy. Activities include hucksters, an art show, videos, filking, a fan lounge, child care, and a con suite. Registration: \$20 before July 4; \$25 at the door. Write to: CONGENIAL IV, P.O. Box 44146, Madison WI 53744-4146.

CUBICON '92, July 24-26 MI

This convention, hosted by SF³ and HFCC, will be held at the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus' Recreation and Organizations Center. Events include D&D®, AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, PALLADIUM®, CAR WARS®, and CHAMPIONS® games. Registration: \$4/day or \$7/weekend at the door. For preregistration and GMing information, write to: CUBICON, c/o SF³, 4901 Evergreen, ROC Building, Rm. 210, Dearborn MI 48128; or talk (313)593-5390.

DALLASCON '92, July 24-26 TX

This gaming convention will be held at the Worthington Hotel in Ft. Worth, Tex. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, SUPREMACY®, and AXIS & ALLIES® tournaments. Other activities include an auction, a painting contest, movies, and a dealers' room. For more information and costs, write to: DALLASCON '92, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

IMPACT 2, July 24-26 NE

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Old Mill in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Barbara Hambly, Tom Prusa, Rick Harris, and J. R. Daniels. Other activities include 24-hour gaming, video rooms, a hospitality room, an art show and auction, panels, a dealers' room, and a masquerade. Also: "Alien Prom 2," a fund raiser for Project Literacy U.S. (costs \$1 or used fantasy/SF book in good condition). Registration: \$13/weekend for a game/hospitality pass, or \$25/weekend for a full pass; single-day passes are available. Write to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

VEGASCON '92, July 25-26 NV

This gaming/comics convention will be held at the Palace Station hotel in Las Vegas, Nev. Events include AD&D®, STAR WARS®, and DC HEROES® games. Guests include Greg Gorden, Mike Grell, and Mike Nystull. Convention proceeds will benefit the Special Olympics. Registration: \$18. Write to: VEGASCON, 4210 Chatham Cr. #1, Las Vegas NV 89119; or call (702) 733-7470.

CANGAMES '92, July 31-August 3 *

This convention will be held at the Skyline hotel in downtown Ottawa, Ontario. Events include a wide variety of role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, movies, and 24-hour gaming. Family discounts are available. For more information and costs, write to: CANGAMES, P.O. Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

TACHY4CON, August 1-2 FL

This convention will be held at the Deland Hilton in Deland, Fla. Guests include Wendy and Richard Pini. Activities include Starfleet's 3rd Annual Region 2 Competitions. Registration: \$14/weekend. Write to: TACHY4CON, 426 S. Lakemont Ave., Winter Park FL 32792; or call: (407) 628-5047.

KUBLA KHAN III, August 7-9 UT

This gaming/comics convention, presented by Comics Utah and Terrain Specialties, will be held at the Utah State Fairpark in Salt Lake City,

Continued on page 76



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Part 29: Letters! We get letters!

by **Bruce A. Heard**

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew. but you know all that. This month, however, Bruce Heard takes a vacation, the

Princess Ark rests in port, and you get to read your own mail on the D&D® game!

Letters

How about a CREATURE CRUCIBLE™ product featuring creatures like chameleon men, gator men, hutaakan, lupins, pachydermions, rakasta, snappers, tortles (all from AC9 Creature Catalogue), and good old lizard men?

We could handle these guys (especially lupins, rakastas, tortles, and snappers) in either a new CREATURE CRUCIBLE product or an occasional chapter in future Gazetteers covering this region of the Savage Coast. Any preferences?

Why don't Glantri, Karameikos, Alfheim, or other countries have airships? Doesn't

this Alphatian monopoly upset the campaign balance? What's stopping Alphatia from using its deadly, modern fleet against other realms?

Airships are extraordinarily expensive to produce, and wizards are extraordinarily uninterested in wars. Alphatia indeed possesses many of these wonders, but they required centuries of magic-use to build. Wizard-princes such as Haldemar own these vessels, and they would rather save them to keep rival wizards at bay than risk them alongside the imperial fleet in a foreign war that may not return much other than mundane gold. Sure, Alphatia could easily overrun many nations, but is that wise? If a powerful state with the latest war technology decided to go on a rampage just for the sake of using its weapons, what would happen to the global economy? Perhaps Alphatian wizards figured that their empire is big and rich enough as it is. On the other hand, any kingdom would think twice before raiding Alphatian coasts.

I've noticed that your article series includes a developed cast of characters of different creatures and races. These well-rounded personalities serve as the crew of an almost fully automated flying ship that can shoot magical energy weapons. The ship's mission is to explore and seek out new civilizations, while occasionally getting into air-to-air battles with the evil Klingo—er, Heldanners. You've even thrown in little details like chief engineers, away teams, and cloaking devices. Is it reasonable to assume that the inspiration for this series come from a certain famous TV show?

Although that was not the original intent, the magic-heavy background in Mystara certainly contributed to that set-up. Live long and prosper!

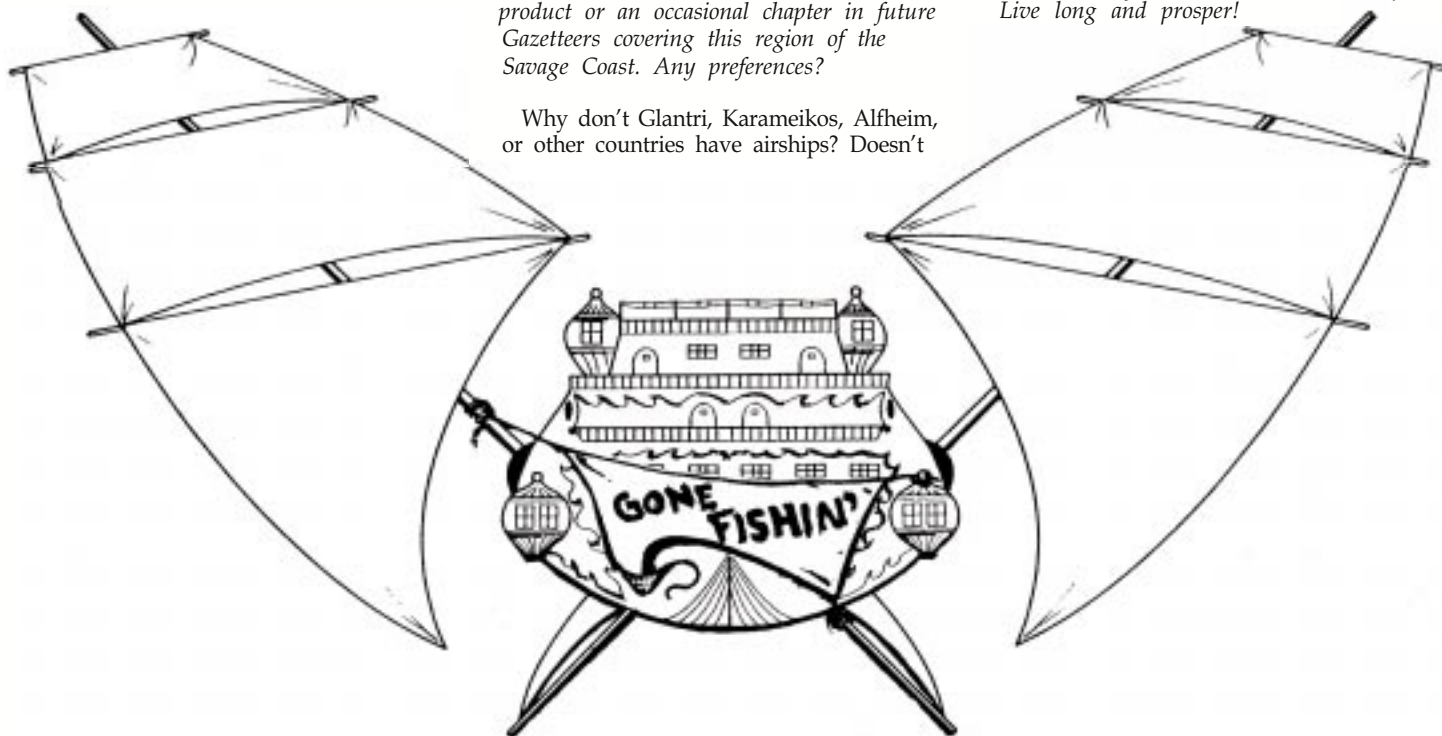


Table 1
Nithian Armor

Armor	Cost (gp)	Enc. (cn)	AC	Notes
Armlet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Anklet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Bracelet, pair	5	5	*	Partial Armor (as per Skill)
Textile armor	15	50	+1	Partial Armor
Leather harness	15	20	+1	Partial Armor
Breast plate	15	100	+1	Partial Armor, without harness
Breast plate	30	110	+2	Partial Armor, with harness
Leather helm	10	50	+1	Partial Armor
Battle helm	20	100	+2	Partial Armor
Nithian shield	10	50	+1	See below
Nithian scale armor	20	200	7	Can use with helm and shield
Nithian plate mall	40	400	5	Can use with helm and shield

Table 2
Nithian Weapons Equivalents

Weapon	Price	Enc.	Combat equivalent
Short khopesh	15 gp	80 cn	Bastard sword, one-handed
Normal Khopesh, used one-handed	25 gp	100 cn	Bastard sword, two-handed
Normal Khopesh, used two-handed	25 gp	100 cn	Great two-handed sword
Heavy eye axe	4gp	30 cn	Hand axe
Mace-axe	-	40 cn	Mace or hand axe
Staff-bow	15 gp	60 cn	Short bow or staff
Short spear	2 gp	20 cn	Use normal spear statistics but with a throwing dagger's base damage
Sword-staff	-	100 cn	Use pole axe statistics but with a normal sword's base damage
Throwing stick	1gP	10 cn	Special (see below)

Table 3
Nithian Weapon Mastery

	Mastery	Ranges	Damage	Defense	Special
[P=M]	Basic	10/20/30	d2	-	-
	Skilled	15/30/45	d4	H:+1AC/1	Stun (s)
	Expert	20/40/60	d6	H: +2AC/2	Stun (s)
	Master	25/50/75	P: 2d4+ 1 S: d8	H:+3AC/3	Stun (s)
	Gd Master	30/60/90	P: 2d6 + 1 S: d10	H: +4AC/4	Stun (s)

[P = M]: Primary target is either a monster using natural attacks (claws, bites for example) or an opponents caught with a missile weapon in his hands

P: Primary target

S: Secondary target (opponents with hand-held weapons like swords and daggers)

H: Armor-class bonus to the throwing sticks user against attacks from or opponents using hand-held or thrown weapons

AC/#: Number of times the AC bonus can be used each round

Note: Don't forget to apply the Hit Roll bonuses from the table on page 76 of the *Rules Cyclopedia*. Stun effects are explained on page 81 of the same book. The throwing stick cannot be used in melee; it is a missile weapon. Druids, wizards, and clerics may also use the throwing stick.

You described an ironwood spell in an earlier episode of this column, but you don't specify what armor class the spell is capable of producing.

Right. The spell transforms wood to metal. This means you have to carve a suit of armor out of wood, then have it transformed. Of course, chain mail would be impossible to carve out of wood, but plate armor might work. You get the armor class corresponding to the type of armor produced.

I am happy to hear that Gazetteers on Wendar, Sind, and the Heldann Freeholds are in the works. Your stories about the Heldannic Knights makes the Freeholds more interesting. Is there a possibility for a separate Gazetteer on Norwold? Even though it is included in *Dawn of the Emperors*, many modules take place there and Norwold deserves better treatment.

Norwold has always been an "800-lb. gorilla." Many people would like to see it covered, but it is so big that it hardly fits the Gazetteer format. Norwold is obviously interesting, and it has lots of wilderness for characters in search of dominions to establish, but we'll have to use a 24-miles-or-more hex scale in order to fit that territory on a map.

Are there rules for determining hull points for ships? I would like to create airships of my own and need an accurate estimate of such a ship's strength.

Unfortunately there are no such rules. I guess you need to compare ship sizes and prices with the ones described in the Rules Cyclopedia. Also check GAZ9 The Minrothad Guilds, if you have it (Book 1, page 25).

Are there any plans to bring firearms into the D&D game?

No. It's up to you to decide whether to have them or not.

Exactly what is Haldemar prince of?

Haldemar is related to the King of Floating Ar. Because of this, he is allowed to bear the title of prince. His estate consists of the lower of Haaken on a floating rock and, down on the surface, a vast farming community, a few villages, and the family mansion. These are private lands, not an actual principality like Glantri.

While studying the continental-drift theory in my science class, I came upon an exact copy of the D&D world's planetary map. It was a map of the Earth 135 million years ago. I would like to know whether whoever created the D&D planetary map used the Earth map as a guide?

He did. The original designer of the D&D Masters' Set started with a map of our Earth millions of years ago. The likeness stops there, however. Over the years, the development of Mystara took that world further away from the original idea (a hollow planet, two moons, magic, etc.).

After reading the otherwise excellent HWR2 *Kingdom of Nithia*, I noticed two irritating omissions. The promised armor and shield statistics do not appear on the cover, as stated. Secondly, contrary to the statement on page 39 of the *DM's Tome*, no details about statues are provided in the "Mystical Structures" section. As I mentioned above, other than these two snafus, the supplement is an interesting read and certainly valuable for the money.

You're right. This complaint has become quite common these last few months. Here a solution I hope will be satisfactory:

Kingdom of Nithia mentioned several types of armor, including the great Nithian shield, partial armor, and full armor. Among these were the armlet, anklet, bracelet, breast plate, leather harness, leather helm, battle helm, textile armor, scale/textile armor, and plate mail.

The use of the armlets, anklets, and bracelets is explained in the section on page 26 of the *Player's Tome* that deals with Bracers' Skills. They can be used in conjunction with a leather harness or breast plate. They do not affect armor class for armor or combinations of partial armor providing AC 6 or better. The use of a shield precludes the use of the Bracers' Skill, and the skills total bonus on armor class should be limited to +4 in any case. See the Nithian Armor table for details.

Nithian shields, because of their light build, can easily be destroyed, which happens in any combat round during which the character sustains five points of damage from a single attack, or 10 points or more from a combination of attacks.

Thieves can use any of the partial armor except the battle helm and the breast plate. Textile armor comes with a textile helm. In game terms, the latter provides protection against the sun only (no armor-class bonus).

As far as the statement on page 39 is concerned, regarding the statues, check page 42, on the power that pyramids have over statues. That was the intended use of statues in *Kingdom of Nithia*. The mention of the "three" mystical structures is misleading in that respect - sorry.

On page 19 in the Heavyman section of HWR2 *Kingdom of Nithia*, there is mention of Shield Back and Nithian Armor skills that aren't described in the skills section. Is there a weapon mastery chart for Nithian weapons? GAZ12 has two other weapons, the lasso and the Ethengar lance.

The Shield Back skill is pretty straightforward. If your character acquires this Dexterity skill, your character benefits from a +1 armor-class bonus against missile weapons shot from behind. This means the character wears his shield (medium size or larger) on his back. The shield has no effect against hand-held weapon attacks (like a thief's backstab, for example). The Nithian Armor skill should

have been removed from the final text; please ignore that mention.

The author did not originally design Nithian weapons to be used with the full Weapon Mastery rules. The weapon chart inside the product's cover should be treated as a simpler alternative to the Weapon Mastery rules. If you intend to use the Weapon Mastery rules, ignore the chart given in *Kingdom of Nithia*.

Several weapons listed inside the product's cover can be taken straight from the Weapon Mastery chart with little or no modification (e.g., battle axes, pole axes, clubs, maces, normal and short swords, halberds, pikes, staves, and all missile weapons other than the heavy eye axe, the throwing stick, the short spear, and the staff-bow). For the former, use the price and encumbrance of their Weapon Mastery chart equivalent. For the latter and other yet unmentioned weapons, I would recommend the equivalents in Table 2.

The mace-axe is a weapon mounted with both mace and axe heads. Your character must expend two skill slots for each level of weapon mastery with this special weapon. Both the mace and hand axe skills have to be acquired at the same time because this is a single weapon. Then freely use one set of weapon statistics or the other for the desired effect. The same logic applies to the staff-bow: it is a staff when used in melee, or a short bow when used

for missile fire. For the perfectionists among you, limit the staff-bow's range to that of a sling.

This leaves us with the throwing stick. We'll have to make up its own Weapon Mastery chart, as per Table 3.

There were several glitches in the Nithian Weapons section, especially along the lines of textual descriptions not matching the game data in the cover charts. The above should solve most of these problems. And finally, there are the Ethengar lasso and lance: for the sake of simplicity, use the net skills for the lasso, and the spear for the lance.

Will there be any kind of *Monstrous Compendium* for the D&D game?

Yes. We are considering a complete revamping of the old AC9 *Creature Catalogue*. The new version will be bigger and better reflect approaches begun in the *Rules Cyclopedica*. Some of the more questionable monsters may get dropped and others added from previous D&D products, while expanding and clarifying the monster descriptions. Ω

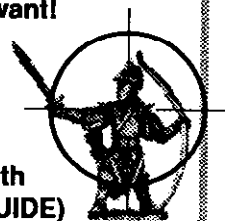
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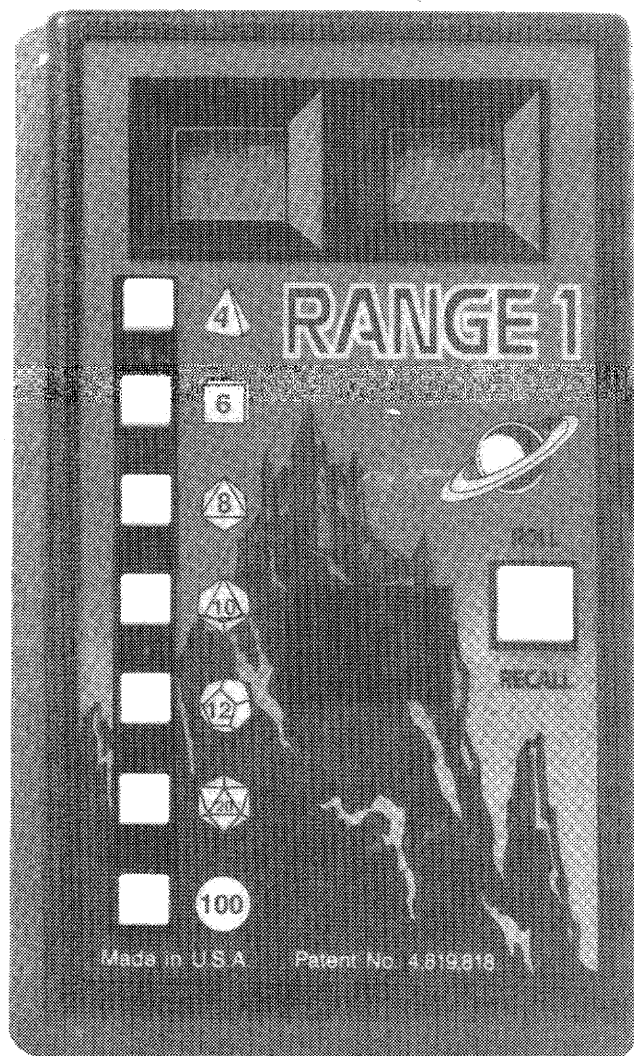


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The Wild, Wild World of Dice

by Michael J. D'Alfonsi

You can't live with 'em,
but you can't game
without 'em

Dice are the heart and soul of role-playing games. They are also the cause of more arguments and hurt feelings than an army of rules lawyers. What is it about these lumps of plastic that arouses such passions? Could it be the strange habits of their owners, or is it some curse placed upon them by a long-dead archmage?

Whatever the reason, dice play such an integral part in most role-playing games that we often find ourselves confronted by and dealing with all sorts of exotic and bizarre behaviors. What follows is something of an anecdotal history of my experiences with dice owners and their quirks. I will say now that I am no less guilty than most, maybe even crazier than some. I will also offer some hints as to how you can minimize the dice-related anxiety of your gaming group.

1. *Superstitions.* We're all superstitious to a degree, but dice seem to inspire nearly medieval beliefs among their users. One of the strangest guys I ever gamed with

had his brother, a lay minister, bless his dice before every gaming session. Another longtime comrade of mine used to change dice every hour on the hour. He had eight complete sets of dice, though only he could tell which dice belonged to which set (the dice in each set were not sorted by color). My first Dungeon Master had a tray in which he rolled his dice. Any die that jumped out of this tray was immediately disposed of because it was under a "chaotic influence." I never did ask him how much he spent on dice, but I'm sure he'd be rich today if he never followed this habit.

You can see from the above examples that superstitions can be bothersome, weird, or downright irritating. My advice to gamers is that if you must hold to your superstitions, keep them to yourself. Making a big production out of your beliefs will only get you into trouble with your friends.

2. *Specific dice.* Have you ever had someone insist that a certain twenty-sided die always rolled high, while another always rolled low? He has a different die for everything, and his insistence on this-or-that die's properties drives everyone crazy. My first DM (the guy who liked to throw out dice) was an orc fanatic. He spent hours drawing them or creating new ways of making them more lethal. Last I heard, he was even trying to create an orcish language. Anyway, he had a set of red dice with black numbers just for his beloved orcs. Goblins, giants, and other NPCs all used the dice pool, but the orcs killed, maimed, and saved using their own special dice.

Another specific-dice quirk is the ongoing opaque-vs.-crystal argument. Proponents of gem dice say they are beautiful, while opaque-dice users prefer the easy-to-read solid dice. I have to agree with the solid-dice side of the argument. They are easier to read and do seem to hold up better.

3. *Strange habits.* One player in my group has seen too many Las Vegas movies. He blows on his dice before throwing them, and if there is a female nearby he asks her to "kiss the cubes." More often than not he will also shout, "Baby needs a new pair of shoes!" as he is rolling. You can see how this stuff can blow an evening.

A girl who was in my high-school gaming group was also a tarot enthusiast. After reading in a book that many tarot readers put their cards under their pillows at night, she started putting her dice bag under her pillow at night. I don't know about you, but I think that would give you one heck of a headache in the morning. She claimed that sleeping with her dice got them "in tune with her personal biorhythmic vibrations." Is it any wonder that she also sported a mood ring and wore sandals everywhere?

These folks are strange, but the crown goes to my best friend from junior high school. This guy had 12 dice, two of each

sort, all of them purple. This isn't that weird, except for the fact that he gave each and every one of those dice its own name. They were named for the first 12 emperors of the Roman empire: Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula (a wicked little 1d12 used for long-sword blows vs. large monsters in AD&D® games), Claudius, Nero, Vitellius, Galba, Otho, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. Not only that, but he talked to them! He would try to coax Claudius (a 1d20) not to stumble but to roll high. He claimed that Augustus (the other 1d20) could roll high numbers "as quick as boiled asparagus" (the emperor's favorite phrase). Believe it or not, this guy is now the manager of a classical-music radio station.

The most irritating and unnecessary of all such strange habits is undoubtedly toying with dice. Some players like to grab and drop their dice constantly during a gaming session, creating a horrible sound guaranteed to grate anyone's nerves. Others put their dice between their hands, then rub them together over and over.

4. *Dice bags.* No dice collection would be complete without something to keep them in. Though there are many fine dice bags available on the market, the ingenious devices people come up with in which to store their dice never cease to amaze me. The competition is fierce. Leather seems to be the most popular choice, because it is chic and looks nice. When I was in high school, the felt bags from bottles of Crown Royal whiskey were very popular, and anyone who's father drank the stuff became very popular. This gave way to velvet jewel pouches, carved boxes of fragrant wood, and crystal jars. The two best dice containers I've ever seen were a dried deer's stomach and a banks currency bag.

5. *Too many dice.* There's one in every group: the guy who has 200 dice. No mere dice bag for this guy; he's got to have a whole backpack for his collection. When he spreads out his stuff, it takes up half the table. His dice get into everything, like sand at the beach.

I contacted several of my fellow role-players in the area and asked them for the record for most dice owned by a single player. Of the 72 players we know between us, 10 have over 100 dice. The record for my circle of players and DMs is 382: 100d6s, 30d4s, 89d8s, 89d10s, 22d12s, and 52d20s. When asked why he needed so many dice, he said: "For years I just kept losing dice and buying new ones. One day I found all the dice I'd lost, and here they all are."

6. *Cheater, cheater!* The plague of many a craps game is the dice mechanic, or dice cheater. This guy cheats only for money. In role-playing, it's for his character's life and death!

While few players go to the lengths of using crooked dice, you should be aware that they exist. You can go into any novelty shop and get a pair of weighted dice. Some

of these dice are quite ingeniously disguised, while others can be spotted easily. Anyone with an AD&D game character that has straight-18 stats probably didn't get them by luck.

Most cheats are far more resourceful. Take the guy who rolls percentiles but never specifies which die is for tens. I confess that I am a recovering offender in this department. Once I decided to quit, I bought an odd-colored 1d10 and told my group that this die was always the tens die.

Another irritating player is the one who just drops the dice, rather than actually rolling them. Amazing how they always seem to get the good rolls, huh? One girl I knew had this down to a science. She could roll anything she wanted at will. Two years ago she tried this in Lake Tahoe. She'll never shoot craps at Caesar's again.

7. *A few last thoughts.* Dice should not cause problems; they should make the game better. Sometimes, through our dice, we unleash the full brunt of our personalities on our gaming group. Can you blame people for getting upset?

The first thing to do is only keep a reasonable number of dice. Collect all you want, but bring only what you need to the game. Only one of each die (with 2d10s for percentile rolls) are needed. If you don't like to reroll a die several times, I suggest the following: 5d4 (for AD&D game *magic missiles*), 10d6 (for *fireballs* and character creation), 2d8 (sword damage), 2d10 (percentiles), 1d12 (whoever uses them much, anyway?), and 1d20 (it's all you really need). You don't need 30-sided or 100-sided dice, or any of the other bizarre shapes.

Above all else, show some courtesy and common sense. Make your rolls where everyone can see them (DMs excluded, of course, but DMs are on their honor). Roll your dice gently; don't drop them or throw them across the room. Keep your dice in good working order—that is, fairly new with clearly visible numbers. If the edges become worn, replace the die. If somebody forgets his dice, lend him some. He'd do the same thing for you.

Don't forget the most important thing of all: have lots of fun. Ω

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Llachior Blackthorn

Male human

11th-level fighter

ARMOR CLASS: 1 (chain mail +4)

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 72

THACO: 10

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2

ATTACK BONUSES: +1 (strength)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type +3 (strength)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Immune to normal missiles (see text)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil (see possessions)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

PROFICIENCIES: Weapon --Battle axe, bastard sword, club, dagger, sling, spear, war hammer; Nonweapon--Animal Handling, Blind-Fighting, Boating, Riding (Land-Based), Swimming

S 18/36 I 18 w 15

D 12 c 14 CH 15

AGE: 38 SIZE: M

HT: 6' WT: 184 lbs.

HAIR: Brown EYES: Gray

POSSESSIONS: Chain mail +4, battle axe +2, ring of spell turning, wand of magic missiles, helm of underwater action, 1-6 potions of healing

TREASURE: 1-20 cp, 1-20 sp, 2-20 ep, 10-100 gp, 5-40 pp; 20% chance of 2-20 gems (DM's choice of types and sizes); in train, 1-100 silver "trade bars" (each worth 25 gp)

Llachior Blackthorn is a merchant of the city of Velen, in Tethyr. He wanders the northern lands frequently, arranging the affairs of Velen's trading enterprises and constantly seeking new markets and contacts. Velen must continually battle the pirates of the isles and ceaselessly replenish its strength, both in men and money. Llachior will try to persuade any unattached fighters or adventurers to join the town watch of "beautiful" Velen, part of "the

CARAVANS

interesting in the Realms

strong arm that smashes pirates."

Llachior is well loved in Velen; its citizens will leap to his defense if he is imperiled. He is seldom in Velen, however, preferring to travel elsewhere by land. Unusual for a Velaen (i.e., an inhabitant of Velen), he has little love for the sea.

Those of the Blackthorn family were minor nobles of Tethyr, based in Velen. Long before the overthrow of Tethyr's monarchy, disease and misfortune had decimated the family's ranks and coffers; Llachior is the last of his line. Every babe born to the Blackthorn family had a *permanent* protective spell cast upon him or her at naming, an expensive custom indeed. Llachior's permanent aid is *protection from normal missiles*, which has saved him from many brigands' arrows.

Over the years, Llachior has been almost everywhere in Faerun north of Calimshan, making a comfortable living by trading what is in short supply here for large quantities of what is rare and highly desired there. He travels everywhere regardless of danger to unload his goods. Such a life has often led him into conflict with brigands, and Llachior has developed a hearty hatred for such parasites. He delights in acting like a terrified merchant until brigands have shown themselves, whereupon he and his comrade Ondul (described hereafter) go on the attack, seeking to slay or cripple as many foes as possible.

Llachior is always looking for someone to settle down with, but he has had little success in finding a partner thus far, perhaps because of his high standards. He's looking for someone beautiful, intelligent, good-natured, and, above all, honest. She must enjoy and engage in swordplay and traveling, and be willing to make her residence in Velen. Personal wealth would be helpful as well.

Llachior is himself a kind but stern straight-shooter, always open in his dealings and on the lookout for new places and faces, trade goods, and jokes to share along the trail. He wears rich robes of orange silk and a brown fur cloak over his chain mail, all of which makes him look grossly fat (he's not). He always travels with his friend, Ondul, and with five hunting dogs that he has trained until they can work together with an ease and organization that seems almost telepathic. The dogs wear light studded leather armor and spiked collars. In combat, treat them as war dogs (*Monstrous Compendium*,



"Dogs") of 16 hp each. They always know Llachior's scent and voice, and never attack him.

Ondul Jarduth

Male human

8th-level cleric of Helm

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 62

THACO: 16

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUSES: +1 (strength)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type +1 (strength)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Cast spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

SPELLS: 5,5,4,3

PROFICIENCIES: Weapon— Flail, mace, war hammer; Nonweapon— Alertness, Direction Sense, Endurance, Tracking

S 17 I 16 W 18

D 14 C 16 CH 14

AGE: 32 SIZE: M

HT: 6'4" WT: 236 lbs.

HAIR: Blond EYES: Hazel

POSSESSIONS: Chain mail +1, war hammer +4 (if thrown, it returns automatically to the thrower's hand; upon command it can glow with an amber faerie fire radiance), 1-8 scrolls of various curative spells, and 1-6 dispel magic scrolls.

TREASURE: 1-6 cp, 1-10 sp, 1-6 ep, 2-40 gp, 1-10 pp

Llachior Blackthorn's constant companion, Ondul "Warhammer" Jarduth, is a quiet, good-natured giant of a man who guards Llachior because he sees Llachior's survival as a good thing for folk generally (Llachior gets goods to places where they are needed) and for Ondul's hometown of Velen in particular. Llachior is also Ondul's longtime friend, and their travels give Ondul plenty of opportunities to guard the weak or law-abiding against brigands and worse.

Helm and the priesthood of "the Guardian" both approve of Ondul's actions. Most priests of Helm are forced to remain in one place (to guard a stationary object, location, or person). It is good to have a traveling cleric of some power to carry messages, supplies, and items of value from priest to priest about the Realms. Ondul loves to travel and delights in Llachior's wit and many jokes along the way.

Ondul himself tends to be close-mouthed and shy. He enjoys a good wrestle or a feast, but he generally keeps quiet and out of the way. He doesn't know what he'll do if Llachior ever marries and settles down, but he doesn't openly hamper his friend's search for a mate. Perhaps, he imagines, he could found a fortified abbey of Helm near Velen, and make the countryside

strong and safe again.

Ondul was born in Velen but was orphaned in a sea battle. He was too sick to serve on the crew of the merchant vessel that limped into the harbor of Baldur's Gate after fighting off pirates (and burying both of Ondul's parents at sea). The ship's captain left him as a ward of the temple of Helm, where Ondul flourished, growing quickly in bulk and in his devotional studies, until upon attaining the rank of Adept he was sent to Velen, to aid the small and struggling shrine of Helm there.

The canon of the shrine, Orm Talath, soon told the boy that he needed a servant like he needed an attack of the boils—the service of Helm was to be furthered "out there" in the wide world. So Ondul asked a tirelessly traveling merchant of Velen, Llachior Blackthorn, if he would mind a companion. Llachior said he'd try it rather warily, but the two soon became firm friends and comrades-in-arms.

Ondul has a great memory for landmarks, trails, and the look of the land wherever he's been. As a consequence, he can readily find caches of goods or treasure that he and Llachior buried somewhere in the wilderness years before, or a house in Waterdeep he visited briefly 10 years ago.

Sharest Tanthalar

Female human

9th-level fighter

ARMOR CLASS: 5 (dexterity bonus and leather armor)

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 72

THACO: 12

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4/1 with daggers (specialization), 3/2 with other melee weapons

ATTACK BONUSES: +1 attack (strength), +1 with thrown daggers (specialization)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type +1 (strength); +2 with thrown daggers (specialization)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Psionic wild talent

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good

PSIONIC ABILITY: Wild talent—telepathic devotion; Conceal Thoughts; PSPs: 49

PROFICIENCIES: Weapon— Dagger (specialization), long sword, hand axe, hand crossbow; Nonweapon—Alertness, Blind-Fighting, Survival (Cold), Swimming

S 17 I 17 W 15

D 17 C 16 CH 18

AGE: 29 SIZE: M

HT: 5'11" WT: 168 lbs.

HAIR: Black EYES: Blue

POSSESSIONS: All weapons of proficiency (including six silver-bladed throwing daggers sheathed on forearms, up sleeves, in boots, and at back of neck, concealed by long hair), 1-4 potions

(random types), ring of spell storing containing two dispel magic and two cure critical wounds spells, long sword +4 (Silverkiss: IN 14, EGO 7, CG, speaks Common, can detect invisible objects in a 10' radius, detect secret doors in a 6' radius)

TREASURE: 1-10 cp, 1-20 sp, 2-16 ep, 10-100 gp, 1-20 pp; 70% chance of 1-100 gems (DM's choice of types and sizes)

Sharest is a breathtakingly beautiful and very astute caravan master. Clad in black armor and fully armed at all times when she appears in public, Sharest is never without at least 12 loyal zero-level men-at-arms, her senior caravan-riders (their names are Bedarn, Bron, Chase, Helmar, Lhiorst, Libarr, Nim, Obbar, Resparr, Rhaal, Shuld, and Vhelt).

Sharest seldom uses her beauty to do more than sway difficult business deals. She never leads on would-be suitors, but always declines them with gracious regret; in fact, she often finds the love-struck behavior of men who see her somewhat irritating. One of her best friends is the mage Nain Keenwhistler of Waterdeep. (This 13th-level NG wizard is detailed in FR1 *Waterdeep and the North*.) Nain tends to be shy and retiring at all times, and treated Sharest as a friend and equal when they met at a party at the mansion of Mirt "the Moneylender." Sharest values his friendship; if ill befalls her and Nain hears of it, he will come looking for the beings responsible.

Sharest is merry, graceful, and husky-voiced, and she wears her black hair long. Her use of hand-held crossbows and her current practice with whips (her next weapon of proficiency will be the whip) betray her occasional dealings with beings of the Lands Below, the subterranean realms beneath Faerun, but she is currently active in the Sword Coast North and the Dragonreach. She leads caravans through the most dangerous regions, such as the Stonelands north of Cormyr, and the High Moor near Dragonspear Castle, and she has often found herself at swords' points with forces of the Zhentarim.

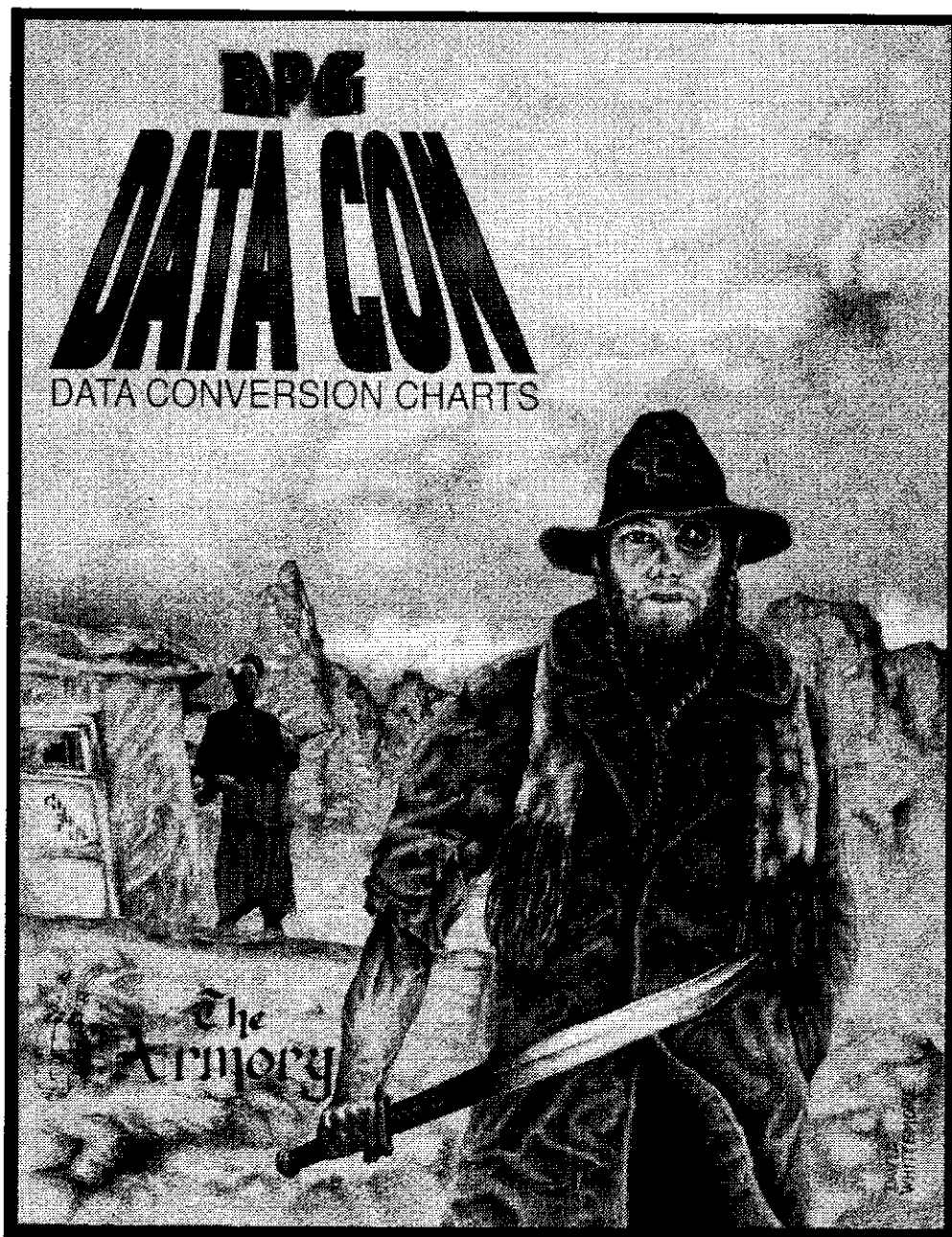
Sharest is currently on the lookout for magical powers or items that will enable her to stand and fight the more powerful mages of the Zhentarim, such as a ring of spell turning or a greenstone amulet. The Zhentarim have sent several parties to waylay and slay her; she plans to return the favor.

Sharest is either a Harper or an ally of the Harpers. Her true aims and goals remain secret beyond her known opposition to slavery, the Zhentarim, and brigands in general. If she has a husband or lover, she keeps him a secret, too (he would likely be a Harper). If she can be said to have a home, it would be the city of Silverymoon, but she also enjoys visiting Hillsfar, Suzail, Everlund, and Waterdeep, and she maintains rooms or houses in those cities.



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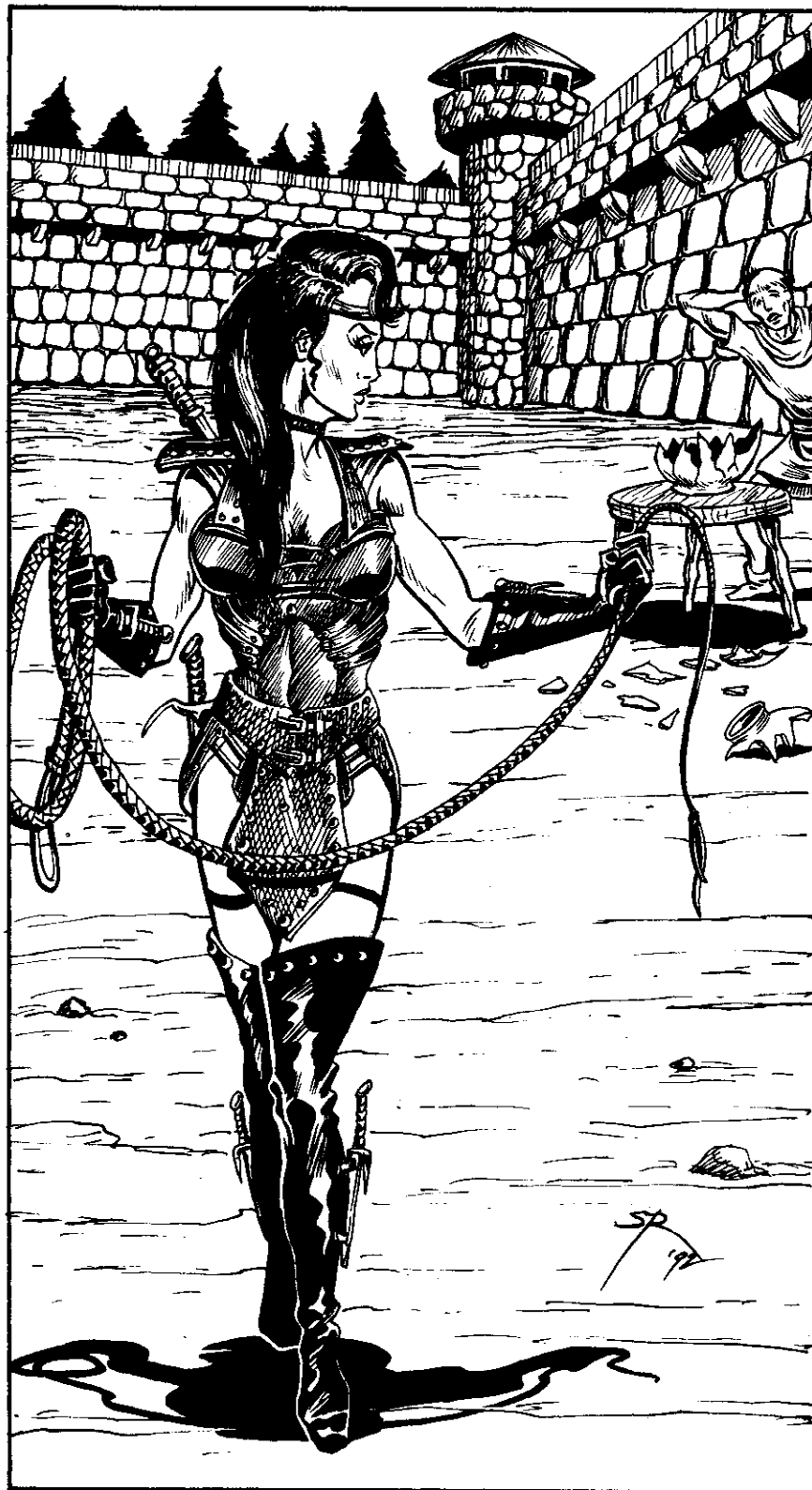
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Sharest is famous for her single-handed defeat of a pair of mind flayers near Yulash, apparently resisting their powers of mental attacks. She followed this by killing the drow who had accompanied them. According to her, the band of dark creatures was on its way to Zhentil Keep, to trade with the Zhentarim—a common practice, she fears. Sharest has otherwise avoided public speaking and a high profile, preferring to be left alone and to go her

own way. One of the most experienced of current caravan masters operating in the North, she has been trading almost ceaselessly for the last 12 years.



Emrock Uerngul

Male human

11th-level thief

ARMOR CLASS: 6 (*dexterity bonus; except for a helm and gauntlets, no armor is worn*)

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 61

THACO: 15

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUSES: Nil

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type + 1 (*strength*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Telepathic link with Vleem (see text); thief abilities: 95% pick pockets, 87% open locks, 75% find/remove traps, 95% move silently, 80% hide in shadows, 35% hear noise, 95% climb walls, 55% read languages*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral (*good tendencies*)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

PROFICIENCIES: *Weapon—Short sword, dagger, dart, garotte; Nonweapon—Alertness, Animal Handling, Blind-Fighting, Riding (Airborne), Rope Use*

S 16

D 18

AGE: 52

HT: 5'8"

HAIR: Steel-gray

I 15

C 16

SIZE: M

WT: 194 lbs.

EYES: Hazel

W 16

CH 15

POSSESSIONS: *Vampiric ring of regeneration, ring of spell turning, dagger +2, 1-6 random potions plus potion of extra-healing (see text)*

TREASURE: *Many riches carried (see text), plus 2-20 cp, 5-50 sp, 2-20 ep, 10-100 gp, 1-100 pp; 90% chance of 1-12 gems (DM's choice of types and sizes)*

Emrock is known as "the Mad Merchant" in the Inner Sea lands of the Realms. (In the South, he renders his name as "Im-rock.") Formerly a thief, then a caravan guard and later caravan master, Emrock is a more honest man these days. He makes a good living as a messenger and delivery service across the North, having a secret lair somewhere in the Vast and another in the North near Sundabar. Emrock deals only in relatively small items of high value, such as gems, unique or magical items, documents, sigils, letters, and odd parcels. He encourages clients to protect their precious cargos with seals, magical glyphs, or mechanical traps; he won't try to open them. Emrock prefers to travel in bad weather or darkness, and he seems to enjoy a good fight. Such tendencies, plus his droll, prankish humor, have earned him his "Mad Merchant" nickname.

Emrock is known for his steed and companion: a gigantic, intelligent mantari (see the AD&D 1st Edition FIEND FOLIO® tome, page 62, or the MC14 *Monstrous Compendium*, FIEND FOLIO Appendix) known as Vleem. Emrock and Vleem are partners and friends rather than man and servile beast. They usually communicate

telepathically (100' range), though Vleem understands Common speech. Emrock has also learned to interpret the "veep" warning cry that Vleem emits, as well as his "chuckering" angry sound and his droning croon of pleasure or amusement.

Other giant mantari, or giant air-rays, are known in the Realms, particularly in the jungles of Chult, but they are very rare. Vleem is of an even rarer variety, the giant snow ray, a cold-blooded northern variety. Summer in the human-inhabited lands of the North is too warm for Vleem's liking, and the ray sleeps much of its time in deep, cold caverns. In winter, the ray is often the only creature that can travel through blizzards and sleet-storms, or across icy wastes of water and leagues of deep snow. The high fees Emrock can command for safe delivery of valuables at such times keep him well-fed, indeed.

Vleem eats organic matter of all types, living or dead. Often it munches on treetop greenery or rock lichens of the high peaks, or wallows in battlefield carrion. Vleem is large (12'-long body, with a 10' tail and 26' wingspan) and is a mottled green, gray, and dun in color. His game statistics are: INT semi; AL N; AC 5; MV 1, Fl 18 (A); HD 12; hp 92; THAC0 9; #ATT 1; Dmg 2-8 (bite), 2-8 (wing or tail slap), or 2-12 (ram); SA rammed victim must save vs. spells or be stunned for 1-2 rounds; SZ L; ML 13. Vleem has bony brow ridges that protect his eyes, a small fanged mouth on his underbelly, and a stingless prehensile tail that can wield all weapons (including those of giants) with a +6 damage bonus due to his great strength. Still, Vleem is largely unaggressive; his kind rarely fights. Vleem glides, rippling or beating his body edges and tail when necessary for steering and propulsion. Buoyant internal gas cavities are believed to aid such rays in flight.

Emrock rides Vleem from a high-cantle saddle, to which are strapped long leather "streamers" of pouches. For large cargos, Vleem has been known to tow a boat or sled from just above ground or water level.

Emrock was born in Mirabar and spent his youth exploring the North with his parents, who were prospectors. Orphaned in an orc raid, Emrock wandered south and took to the saddle, adopting the profession of caravan guard as a means of getting fed and paid to travel (finding new victims). Prudence often forced him to curtail his thieving, but Emrock kept his eyes open and learned the ways and the lay of many lands, from Calimshan to the borders of Thay, north to barbarian lands and endless ice from the steppes to the Sword Coast.

In time, he found himself the leader of a surviving remnant of a badly mauled caravan, and decided to become a caravan-master in earnest. His thefts became more astute and his loot more valuable, and at length Emrock was forced to flee from some angry acquaintances who had more magic than he'd reckoned, even after he'd

stolen much of it from them. They pursued him a long way, employing summoned monsters and hired mercenaries, until Emrock climbed some remote peaks to escape. There the pursuit ended, for his pursuers were certain that the orcs would soon slay him.

But there were no orcs in those mountains, because snow rays love orc flesh. Emrock met and somehow befriended Vleem. Perhaps the telepathy between

them is natural, or perhaps the giant rays have magical powers of their own unsuspected by most. Whatever its origins, this teamwork between man and ray has lasted a good 26 seasons now, and Emrock has cached much gold indeed (and not a few magical items, with which he will pursue any who rob or injure him and then escape).

Continued on page 60



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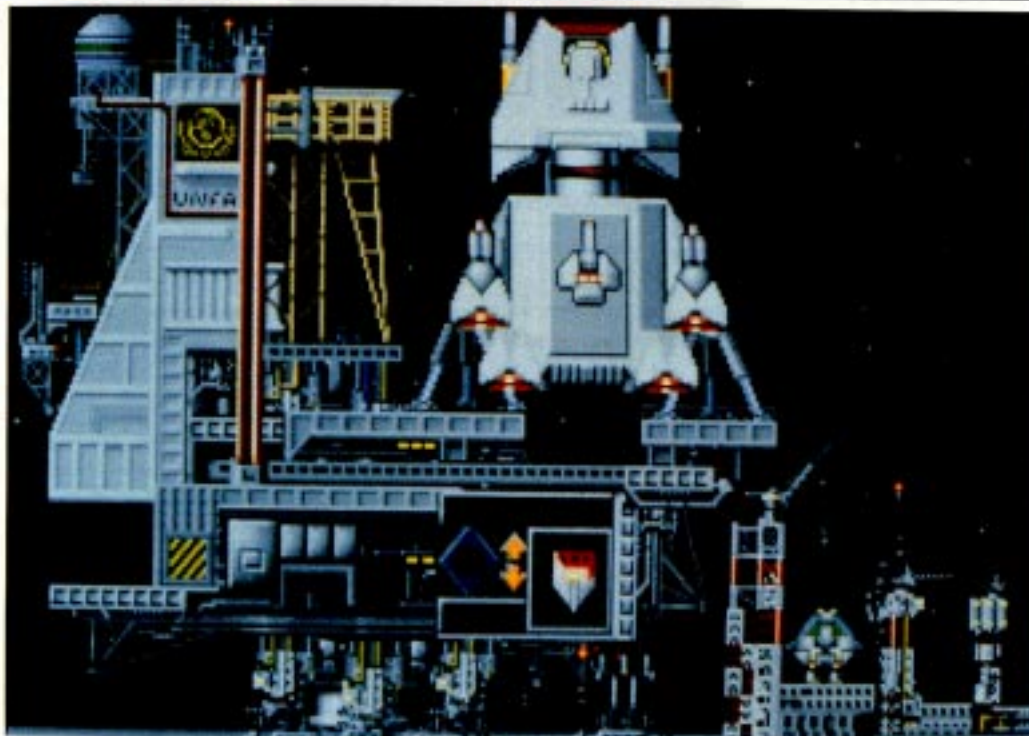
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Searching the cosmos for a great computer game?

KnightLine

Hang on to your PCs, folks—we've just previewed the VGA remake of *Quest for Glory I* (QFGI) from Sierra, and it's now a much better adventure! We again visited Sierra in California's "gold country" and talked with the game developers about their new product offerings. QFGI feels like an entirely new game instead of one that you've already played. Sierra has modeled the main characters from clay, which they then digitize into the game (see the photos with this article). With shadowing and animation, these characters really come alive. You haven't lived until you've entered combat with these beasts! Add in scintillating color and a graphic-icon user interface controlled by your I/O device, and you have an adventure worth revisiting. Sierra is going to make the upgrade affordable for owners of the EGA game, and we advise you don't pass up the

opportunity to obtain the upgraded version. If you've never played *Quest for Glory I*, now is definitely the time to purchase your copy and prepare yourself for some exciting adventuring!

It won't come as any surprise then, when we tell you about our look at *Quest for Glory III* (QFGIII). The artwork is truly awesome, and the adventure is unique, with an African flavor to it. With techniques developed for the remake of QFGI,

QFGIII continues the adventure with more characterization and excitement. The end scene is one you won't soon forget. Also, *The Sierra Network* (TSN), the company's new information system, is going to offer *Red Baron* from Dynamix as yet another of its multiplayer games. This could propel TSN into a leading information service. We'll have a full review of TSN in a future issue of our column.

Speaking of Sierra, the company has released two new bundled packages that are bound to please those readers who are just starting to enjoy computer gaming—pleasing both in the software offered and the price. The first new package is the *Adventure Starter Kit*, which contains *Space Quest I: The Sarien Encounter*, *King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown*, and *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*. The second package has the *Space Quest Trilogy*, which contains

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

the aforementioned *Space Quest I*, plus its two sequels, *Space Quest II* and *III*. The price of each bundle is \$69.95, a reasonable value for the smash-hit games that propelled Sierra to the top of the entertainment software industry. All of these are for PC/MS-DOS machines.

Inner Circle Software has announced the new *Digital Dreams Network*, an on-line entertainment service said to provide the most advanced multiplayer interactive-fiction game for modem gamers. The service will support as many as 128 players simultaneously in its game, *Legends of Future Past*. You create your own characters in this fantasy, then can travel in groups and socially interact. This is a purely text-based game with a huge database of probabilities and formulas for determining the result of your action. This project was created by Jon Radoff, best known for his *Space Empire* and the Paragon Software BBS.

SSI has a new help line. The phone number is (900) 737-4468. The cost is \$0.95 for the first minute and \$0.75 for each additional minute. This number is for game hints only, not for technical support. If you are under 18 years of age, please check with your parents before making a call to this number!

H.E.L.P.

The first request for assistance concerns Interplay's *The Lord of the Rings*, Volume I. "I have reached the house of Tom Bombadil, and Goldberry has asked me to bring her some lilies, which I can't find. I have the Gold Token, Rose's Token, Ghost Ruby, and the Signet Ring, but I don't know how to use them. The words of power I have learned are 'Bombadil and Angmar, but I don't know how to use them, either. Please help!'" writes Jason Mejia of Los Angeles, Calif.

In response to David Crowe's plea in issue #180 for help with *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*, Daniel Devine of Springfield, Mass. has the following words of advice. "In the map room, you need to touch the planets in the shaded area of your map. These are Pesht, Benjamin, Skye, Ryerson, Kathil, and Achenar. Ignore the other planet near them, because it isn't on the map. Invest all but 250 C-Bills in Bethynes stock and save the game outside the arena. Then, fight with the rented 'Mech. If you win, invest the money and repeat this step. Also, if you help stop a robbery you are richly rewarded. The cache is hidden on a small island."

Jake Haney of Lawrence, Kans., comes to the aid of Kyel Erickson who needed help in issue #179 with *Beyond Zork*. "The bubble mirrors come in handy near the end of the game, when you enter the underground maze. Don't light your lantern. Instead, blow a bubble. When it turns into a mirror, turn it so that it reflects light in the direction you want to go. For example, let's say the light is entering the room from an opening to the south-



From clay to computerization on *Quest for Glory I* (Sierra On-Line)

west, and you want to go southeast. Blow the bubble and point it south. When the light hits the mirror, the beam is reflected into the southeast changer.

"Secondly, you don't use the Fountain of Youth on the butterfly, but on the chocolate truffle instead. To make the butterfly turn into a caterpillar, take it to the Gray Grotto, an area within the gray fields of Frotzan. Put the butterfly into the monkey grinder's organ, close the lid, turn the organ's dial to the clock, and turn the crank backwards. When you open the organ, the butterfly is transformed into a caterpillar.

"Finally, it is essential that you get the jewel. Without the cash you get from its sale, you cannot finish the game. You need to find something heavy enough to hold the idols maw still while you climb it to get the jewel. None of your possessions are heavy enough, but the mother hungus is. Instead of saving the baby hungus from the quicksand, attack it. This infuriates the mother so much that she chases you all over the jungle. Simply go to the idol and climb up its maw. The mother hungus, standing at the bottom of the maw, provides the weight necessary to steady the maw's seesaw action, enabling you to get the jewel. Don't worry if you are unable to hang on to the jewel. You can always get it from the mother later."

Reviews

BUCK ROGERS® Matrix Cubed *****
Strategic Simulations, Inc.
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

Even if you didn't know which company published this game before you played it, you'd know the minute you started to play. The same game engine used in SSI's gold-

box series is at work in *Matrix Cubed*.

Whether you're adventuring in an AD&D® game world or worlds of the future, SSI presents the same interface, graphics, and mode of play. Thankfully, the same excitement permeates their adventure games!

Is "sameness" bad? Not in our opinion; it ensures that gamers who already know SSI games can readily and easily become involved in their latest offering. This is especially true for those who played the precursor to this game, the BUCK ROGERS *Countdown to Doomsday* adventure. For a science-fiction role-playing game, this one has more combat than we would have thought possible. The combat rules from the earlier game apply.

The game starts with Earth under the control of NEO (New Earth Organization), but the planet remains pretty beaten up. RAM (Russo-American Mercantile) is still a force to be reckoned with, even though it was beaten in the previous adventure, and it continues to have designs on Earth. It's up to you to follow Buck Rogers' orders and search for the scientists who can build the Matrix Device. This machine transforms any substance into pure energy. As the last hope for Earth, you must succeed.

You may create your own characters, or you can import your characters from the first game in this series. If you decide to create your characters, keep in mind that each character should possess high skill in Maneuver in Zero-G and First Aid. Without the latter, you'll never be able to patch up characters wounded in combat. And, as much of the combat occurs in zero gravity, you've got to be able to move about.

Other requirements include having at least one of your characters develop high Battle Tactic, Pilot Rocket, and all Medic and Repair skills (protect the medic at all costs!). You need to fix not only your rock-



BUCK ROGERS® *Matrix Cubed* (SSI)

et ship but its electrical systems and your weapons, should they break down.

We found the best weapons to pack include any type of needle gun, as they have six shots per round. As your characters become better with their weapon skills, these guns become quite effective. The rocket pistol and rocket rifle are also highly effective, as they cause a lot of damage. Keep a large supply of explosive, chaff, and aerosol grenades. If the enemy fires projectile weapons such as rockets or rifles, chaff grenades protect your characters. Aerosols protect against lasers. For high-strength characters, a mono sword or some form of polearm can really inflict damage on opponents, as these weapons are as effective close up as a weapon that can fire over larger distances. Close combat also prevents the enemy from throwing grenades at your characters.

Aboard your rocket ship, the pilot should be the character with the highest Pilot Rocket skill. Always keep your missiles and K-cannons fully loaded. Make certain you have a character aboard with a high Jury Rig skill; as your ship takes damage in combat, he can try to fix the problem area to maintain your fighting capabilities.

Actual selections of character race are not as important as in other role-playing adventures. It makes sense, however, to select Desert Runners for your Warrior class (if you elect to have any), as they have bonuses to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Just don't expect them to be charismatic!

You must decide which locations to visit first, such as the Caloris Space Port, where attending the coronation of the Sun King is an absolute must. In fact, the interactive part of the adventure starts here, as you try to save His Majesty.

You should also stop General Mavroudis at the Asteroid Base from building the Doomsday Laser. Perhaps you could use the weapon to destroy something else that is very important to the enemy forces.

The Venusian Lowlands offer some exciting moments, such as an interesting two-level laboratory. Watch out for the Lowlanders themselves, Prevention of Unwanted Research and Genetic Engineering (PURGE) attack squads, Mercurians, and Ursadders. We strongly urge that you assist the Lowlanders, especially if they are about to be eliminated by the forces from PURGE.

You want to find Professor Chade when you get to Losangelorg Overland. In the city's Sprawls, a hologram disrupter is hidden. This might help you find the historical museum itself, even though Chade and his daughter are long gone. You are definitely going to need to possess the gargoyle's key to go through the secret door that led to the captives' room. The historical museum, in the desert, is where you will have the opportunity to rescue someone near and dear to the professor. But watch out for robots and RAM troops—they seem to be everywhere.

Other specific areas on interest include the KRUN radio station, an ambush by a warren gang, the chance to perform a rescue in the Ratwurst Den, the Tower Isle residential building where the team's passcard can be altered, Copernicus's Luna Base where your assistance to a Lt. Jenner will give you the wherewithal to rescue another scientist, a weaponry lab where you must halt the spread of a nasty plant mutation as well as complete a rescue, the Fungus Asteroid where you must decide how to approach the Stormriders (cooperation seems best), and the adventure's finale on Jupiter.

This is an extensive adventure with several complex subplots that you must resolve in order to succeed. What's entertaining is the fact that you make selections based on what you know, and these selections can play havoc with the final outcome. Record everything that seems important—it usually is. Make maps like crazy. (One area we think that SSI *must* start to consider is including automapping in its future game releases. It just takes too long to map each and every location. You want to move along in the game, not stop just before every significant encounter to map the area.)

Matrix Cubed is another good adventure from SSI. With characters that can attain high levels, a broad variety of conflicts, interesting puzzles to ponder, and more combat than you can shake a Martian needle gun at, this science-fiction role-playing game proves that SSI continues to produce games that sell well. If you want an adventure that provides new ways to game, new graphics, or new game engines, this isn't it; it relies heavily upon past SSI offerings. However, it is highly playable and enjoyable. *Matrix Cubed* uses VGA graphics, with either AdLib, Sound Blaster, or minimal Roland sound support. If you enjoyed *Countdown to Doomsday*, you'll really like *Matrix Cubed*.

Planet's Edge

New World Computing

PC/MS-DOS version

\$59.95

An ETS (extraterrestrial ship) orbits earth on June 23, 2045. After no response to communications issued by the U.N., the ETS initiates an overwhelming roar of white noise. Every band of the electromagnetic spectrum is jammed. Data links from the Moonbase lose all communications with Earth. Ten minutes later, the U.N.F.A. Moonbase commander tells everyone that Earth is gone. After study, it is determined that Earth has been trapped in a space-time warp.

An investigation team boards the ETS and locates alien artifacts and information. It is decided that a team must be sent out into the galaxy to find the parts necessary to rebuild the machine on the ETS responsible for the planet's disappearance. Indications are that the drive for the ETS came from Alpha Centauri, and that's where it is recommended you start your investigation.

So begins an enormous science-fiction role-playing game. *Planet's Edge* offers battles in deep space and on various worlds. You must communicate with aliens never contacted before; some you should help, others you destroy. A total of 36 different adventures are offered, not counting the interaction necessary with spacefaring races. By retrieving technology and elements from other planets, you can build new weapons and ships at Moonbase to help you conquer more technologically advanced problems as the game progresses.

Seven sectors are in the galaxy, and each possesses dozens of systems. Within each system are planets, asteroids, and space platforms that you can investigate. Find a planet with usable resources so you can retrieve them. Most worlds are uninhabitable and contain no needed elements, but finding and cataloging these planets can be time consuming.

You do not build your own characters in this game. They are predetermined, although you can clone each character and come away with a slight variation in the values of its skill sets.

Your adventure starts in Moonbase; you move around by clicking on locations such as the shipyards, where you build your ship from the parts supplied at the warehouse. As you put your ship together, you are advised as to how much "space" is left for various items you wish to place on the vessel. Definitely take a turreted weapon. The old saying of running away to live and fight another day is quite appropriate when you start the game. The crew quarters enable you to clone your character, which is quite handy if the original set of team members is destroyed by any number of alien encounters. Also in Moonbase is the Research Lab, where scientists and engineers attempt to recreate any device you bring to them.

It is going to take you a long time to get everything needed to save Earth. In the meantime, you might as well have fun doing what you can to advance your adventure. Your first stop must be Alpha Centauri—try to avoid conflicts en route! Once you are aboard your ship, clicking on the characters produces a command window. You want to start out by clicking on the pilot and requesting "Engage Auto-Pilot." When you do, a second menu appears listing the systems you may visit; it starts out with just Sol and Alpha Centauri, but as the game progresses this menu will pack hundreds of destinations.

Five planets are in the Alpha Centauri system. A small informational outpost has been established on a dead moon. The ETS records indicate that this moon is a contact point for observers assisting with the failed Centauri Drive experiment. After you request a scan of the target planet, your science officer informs you that life may still be here. You can beam down—and be confronted by your first enemies. Make certain every character is using armor and weapons.

Once you defeat the robot guardians, you can enter the base. There you encounter an android who is quite surprised that you are not among the aggressors who attacked his base, hunting for tactical data about the sectors. You learn that you are inside the Omegan Forward Observational Station. Taped narrowcasts from all the local sector news services are available. To access a narrowcast, simply step in front of the monitor (your scanner takes care of all your translation needs).

After completing your hunt through the



Planet's Edge (New World Computing)

base, you'll learn that you must visit the Algieban sector, as a critical part of the ETS's machine is located there. You will also learn vital facts concerning other systems; make certain you have a pencil and paper ready when you wander through this base.

During the adventure, you'll find unique and helpful equipment. One method of acquiring better weaponry is to Look at the weapons left by those you have slain. Many weapons and armors can be located and used. Some armors work best against projectile weapons, others against laser weapons.

Planet's Edge does have a few problems. When you orbit any Prime planet, you may find your command to leave orbit simply does not work—you continue to orbit the planet. We recommend you access the auto-pilot, select any system, and then, when your ship leaves orbit, manually take over the controls and select your destination. Also, if you note that the Leader of your group cannot complete a command, or the wrong command is implemented, choose another character as a temporary leader. Try the command again—it should work correctly.

This is a fine science-fiction game, combining space and ground adventuring plus the opportunity to solve interesting puzzles in your search for Earth. The graphics are clean and the animation smooth, although certainly not breaking any new ground in that regard. The sound effects and music through our Roland sound system are composed well, although some of the music will remind you of a certain fantasy role-playing game from the same company.

This game offers numerous hours of enjoyment. The excellent manuals and the star map are quite handy. Be certain you



Planet's Edge (New World Computing)

read all of the included material to help you through the early stages of the quest. With a large number of unusual and exciting quests, as well as the opportunity to better your characters as they progress through the different systems, this game is well worth its cost. We highly recommend *Planet's Edge* for all gamers intrigued with science-fiction role-playing adventures. It uses VGA/MCGA/EGA or Tandy graphics, with Roland, AdLib, Sound Blaster, or Tandy DAC sound.

Clue corner

Planet's Edge (New World Computing, PC/MS-DOS)

1. Don't bother searching the Vega system and its seven planets for materials. Waypoint Nine deserves attention, but only after you either have cargo to trade for entry to the world or are powerful enough to defeat the orbiting protection.
2. Archird is not worth the effort; it's a desert world with no life.
3. Caph system's planets are devoid of anything interesting.
4. Talitha has nothing of interest.
5. On Talitha II, at Avia Castle, perhaps it is wise not to trust the queen's advisor.
6. Burning the flags on Talitha II can keep the guards busy. Perhaps this is a

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good way to obtain a more powerful weapon.

7. To recover the banner on Talitha II, as the queen requests, enter the northeast door-inside the arena. You might even be able to grab the banner without firing a shot! Then, run for the exit. Armed socio-paths will follow you, but only for a while. If you have to attack them, don't hesitate to do so.

8. The path through the flower garden to obtain the levitator is as follows (start in the southwest corner): 2N, 2E, 1S, 2E, 2N, 1W, 1N, 1W, 2N, 1W, 1N, 1W, 2N, 4E, 2S, 2E, 1N.

9. When you enter the far northern hallway, make sure your lead character can sustain a 30 hit-point bomb blast.

10. Your next adventure is to Subra II, where you must give He Who Speaks the item left by the princess in the first adventure.

11. Until you find an Imastyl, you can't communicate on Subra II. Look in the second tree to the south.

12. Slay a blood beast and take alien meat to the creature at the bridge. It's the

only way you'll be able to cross.

13. He Who Speaks is the son of She Whose Steps Are Wise. She is also known as the Magin. You must obtain the Talking Stick from him, but you don't have to kill him.

14. Once you take out the bladderclaw, look in a western corridor for the Talking Stick. Take it to the Magin.

15. When you return the Walking Stick to the Magin, make certain the one who returns it to her also possesses an Imystal. She gives you an invitation.

16. If you don't have any cargo on Algieba 7, you must defeat the space platform and its associated spacecraft before you can beam down for the "festivities."

17. Search the animal cages in the kitchen. Don't trust the Geal A'nai.

18. After you've been transported aboard the Attagi and have your Choassqa cards, you need to win your gravity bar. Try the cards in the slots in the northern wall in this order: 3, 5, 2, 1, 4.

19. Engine Two requires a card sequence of 1, 5, 4, 3, 2.

The Lessers

Pools of Darkness (SSI, PC/MS-DOS)

1. It is easier to win the final encounter against the Vaasan troops if you enter the combat area from either the left or right, not the center.

2. Do not pay the toll in Zhentil Keep. Bluff, and the drow let you pass.

3. Have your mage memorize Power Word Blind to get past the gelt in Man-shoon's Tower.

4. Try to keep Shal alive, as she gives you a vorpal sword that can survive passage through Limbo.

5. Just move on when encountering hostile soldiers upon first entering Mulmaster.

6. Kill Arcam before going to the Sentinel Halls, or he will send out harassing forces.

7. Do not use melee attacks on blue Bane minions, or you will get zapped.

8. Sasha is disgustingly arrogant and a total fluffhead, but save her from wedding Cadorna because you will get lots of experience points.

9. After entering the Inner Palace of Gothmenes, fight Elminster when he first appears to you, as it is a rakshasa in disguise. Any other course gives Gothmenes more clues to finding Elminster and less time for you to find the Crystal of Bane.

Ching Sann

Republic of Singapore

That's it for this month. Please continue to help your fellow gamers! Send your hints and tips to: The Clue Corner, c/o The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. Again, we would appreciate it if you wouldn't call or fax lengthy missives containing hints. Our column-writing hours start at the end of our normal work days, and having the telephone ring at 4:30 in the morning is not our idea of a good time! Thanks for your consideration.

Keep those letters coming. Until next month, game on!

Q

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King of the Caravans

Continued from page 53

Emrock is a shrewd trader, an excellent gambler (a master at spotting all known forms of cheating) and bluffer, and is experienced in battle. Cool, dispassionate, yet entertained by a good contest, be it mental, physical, or political, Emrock enjoys his career.

Gray-bearded and paunchy, with white streaks now appearing in his wavy gray hair, Emrock is calm and genial. He wears a belt with a large round brass plate as a buckle: set into the body-side surface of the brass is a concealed lockpick and a flat metal vial containing a potion of extra-healing. Emrock has friends and contacts across the North, and he has at least one lover: the widowed Jhaele Silvermane, innkeeper of the Old Skull Inn in Shadowdale.

Q



MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

Food Fight Erupts in Neighborhood Supermarket



Carrots, broccoli, and fresh fruit flew into grocery carts as **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer** broke out in area supermarkets.

Consumers are reacting to studies showing that foods high in fiber and low in fat may help reduce cancer risk.

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The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the Food Fight, has more information. Call 1-800-ACS-2345. And, be on the lookout for Community Crusade volunteers armed with shopping lists.

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Dragonlayers



on the Screen

Computer games work best with more than one player

by Dorothy Slama

The pizza was late, as usual. I answered the door, ignoring the voices coming from the den.

"Cure me, I'm poisoned!" cried an insistent voice.

"No! Turn the undead!" another voice called. The pizza delivery man cast an anxious glance into the rooms behind me.

"Do anything, just hurry up," came a calmer voice. "If I get hit again, I'm dead."

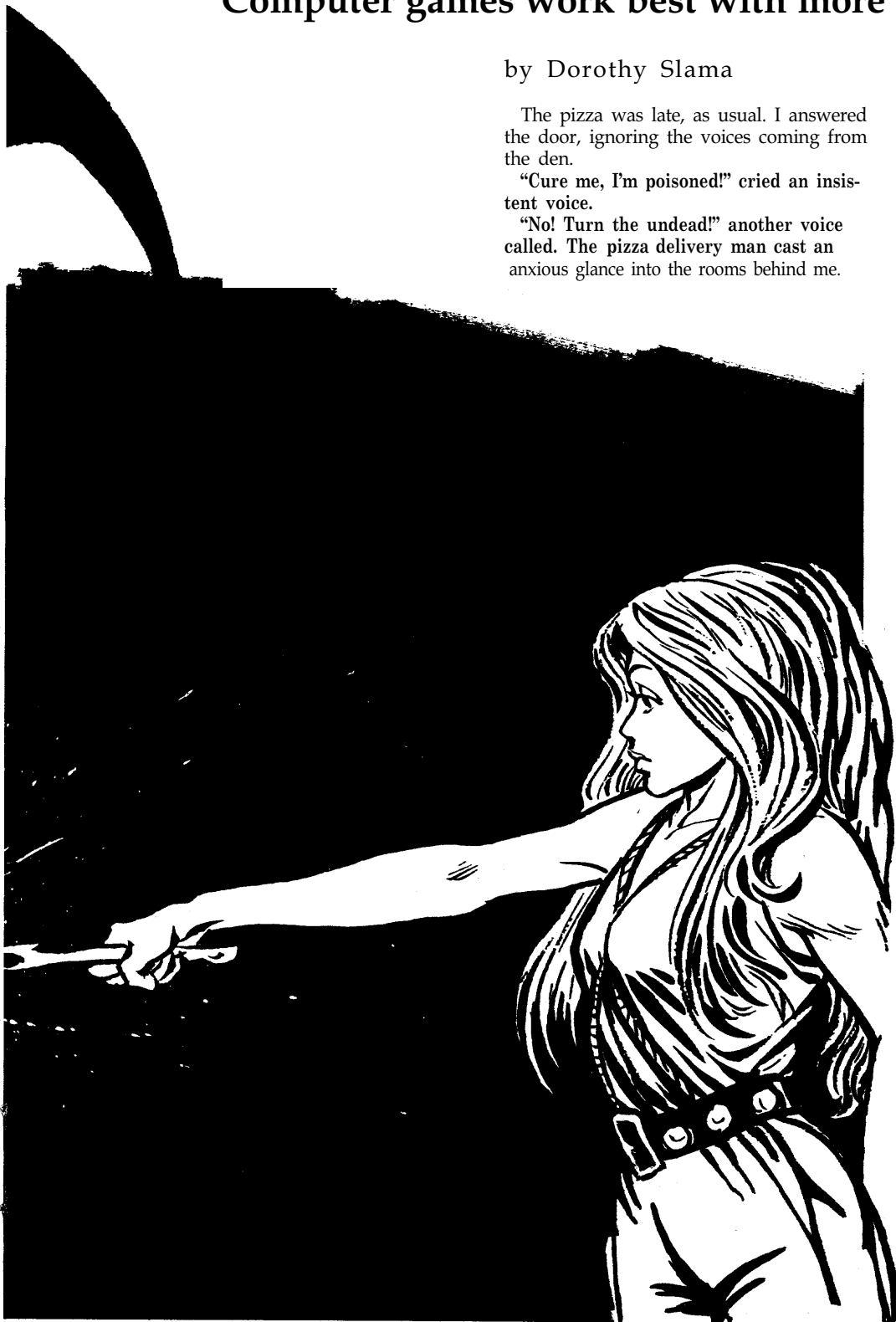
The pizza man didn't wait for his tip.

The excited voices in the next room were those of people enjoying a computer fantasy role-playing game—with a twist. Computer-game enthusiasts are quick to point out the advantages computer-generated RPGs hold over conventional fantasy games. The computer versions contribute consistency, graphics, sound, the element of surprise and well-developed plots. Yet there are some areas in which computer games are lacking. The camaraderie and competition of regular RPGs are diminished, and there is a hollow feeling when live gamers are not present to celebrate great triumphs or mourn cruel deaths.

Fortunately, there is a way to enjoy the best of both worlds. Start with a good computer fantasy adventure. The "Role of Computers" column in this magazine is an excellent guide to worthwhile choices. Then, before you turn on the computer, gather an adventuring party. I don't mean a party of computerized characters; I mean a party of live gamers. We're not talking about an audience to sit idly by and watch your progress as you play. Each gamer will role-play a game character's identity as in a regular game. Having several players adds a new dimension to the computerized fantasy.

Playing computer games with friends has many advantages over playing alone. You retain all the benefits of the computer-generated fantasy and gain the benefits of group interaction as well. The excitement of the game is enhanced by the enthusiasm of the other gamers. Each player hopes to prove his character the most fierce in battle or the most skilled in magic, so the competition isn't limited to what the game can dish out. There's a secondary competition between players. Friendly rivalry as the characters in the party vie for the best weapons and armor adds interest to the mundane chore of dividing the spoils of battle. Battles are more interesting, as players focus on their characters' performances rather than just the outcome. With a properly formed party, the characters will perform better too.

When playing a computer fantasy alone, gamers play favorites. Someone who prefers the action of battle will focus on a



particular warrior, and equip him with the best weapons, armor, and magical charms so his might far exceeds his companions'. Perhaps it's a particularly powerful sorcerer who receives special attention, so her charms and spells can be relied on to rescue the party from the most devious foe. When a group plays a game together, the party is better balanced. Each player focuses attention on one particular character, so the characters develop more quickly and evenly.

Each gamer scrutinizes choices of weapons and armor, searching for the best combination for his character. Fighters seek combat to increase experience points quickly. Sorcerers and priests are quick to suggest the spells with the greatest chance of success for every situation. Placing the burden of battle on any one character quickly induces screams of protest from neglected players. Every player works to prove his character is indispensable. The balanced development of characters greatly increases the entire party's potential for success in battle.

More important, playing with friends is fun. The group of players provides moral support when the game becomes difficult. There is always someone to talk to about the game's progress. When the solution to that difficult puzzle pops into your head at midnight, you can call up someone who cares! Winning battles, exploring new territory, completing quests, and even bad events are more exciting with a group of empathetic partners.

As wonderful as it sounds, playing computer games with a group does have drawbacks. Here are a few guidelines to keep the problems to a minimum.

Choosing players

Player 1: "My wizard attacks with the dagger!"

Player 2: "Hey, you're playing a mage! Find a spell to cast."

Player 1: "I hate reading spell books. Just have my wizard attack!"

Any serious role-playing gamer knows creating a good party is crucial to success. The time you spend creating ground rules for your party will assure a successful game. Once you are fully prepared to start your party, consider the particular friends you will invite to join your group. The rules for creating a human party are quite similar to the rules for creating fantasy characters.

While intelligence and experience are a definite plus, they aren't essential characteristics. Your party of human players can gain experience and insight as the game progresses. Do try to match the game characters' personalities to their players' and achieve a balanced mix. A party filled with reckless warriors may advance quickly in levels of experience, but it may never complete the quests necessary to win the game. Conversely, a party filled with studious and cautious mages may quickly dis-

cover the secret of winning the game, but it won't have the prowess in battle to achieve those goals. The ideal party provides a balance of battle-hungry comrades and scholarly chums.

Once you have gathered your group of gamers, you'll need to create your characters. Before you begin, read the game manual and determine the ideal mix of races, classes, alignments, and other options. It's more fun to allow each player to generate his own character than to assign characters arbitrarily, but everyone should choose from the list of ideal characters; you don't want a party of four clerics. If you have novice gamers in your party, you can help them choose suitable characters. Players who choose magic-using characters should be ready to memorize spell numbers and ingredients, and study the effects of each spell to gauge which is appropriate in each situation. Ideal fighters are willing to risk life and limb while searching for difficult battles to advance more quickly. Fighters must also take an active interest in armor and weaponry, since their characters' performance depends heavily on their equipment.

Be flexible about allowing new characters to join a game. You may start with fewer players than characters, then allow a latecomer to take an unclaimed character. Sometimes players drop out before completing long games, so you'll need replacements. Even better, you could drag out that game you stashed behind the bookcase when you got stuck trying to solve it last year. Your new players may have a new perspective to get you rolling again.

Choosing leaders

Leader: "Let's go to town so my barbarian can train and move up a level."

Player 2: "Good idea. We need to save the experience points."

Player 3: "Forget it. I'm at the keyboard, and I want to keep going."

The designated party leader should be the player operating the keyboard. This eliminates any potential for a renegade keyboard operator ignoring the group's wishes in pursuit of his own goals. Agree on a leader well before the computer is turned on. Some groups are very successful with rotating the leadership position; this way, everyone has a chance to exercise control. Don't try switching leaders in the middle of a gaming session. It sounds easy enough to trade positions every hour, but the keyboard driver will inevitably ask for five more minutes—to finish this battle, reach that castle, or get out of a dungeon. Plan on following your leader for a full game session.

Some games don't adapt well to turn-taking. In games like *Eye of the Beholder* (SSI's licensed AD&D® game saga), reaction time counts in battle. A player who can't type or reacts slowly won't do well in combat. If your group has patience, you

can hope the slow typists gain speed as they become familiar with the game. More likely, you'll want to choose a fast typist as permanent keyboard operator.

Controlling characters

Player 1: "Let me cast Finger of Death."

Leader: "No, Dancing Sword is better."

Player 2: "I'll shoot the crossbow at the stone golem."

Leader: "No, you need to kill the guardsmen. I'll get the golem on my turn."

It's pointless to assign characters to your players if they don't have the freedom to dictate their characters' actions. Players will soon become frustrated and bored if the keyboard operator/party leader ignores them, inputting his own ideas of what the characters should do.

Each player is responsible for deciding his character's moves. The keyboard operator must follow the player's instructions. The exceptions to this rule are few. If a player insists on an action that will harm the party, he can be overruled. Performing poorly in battle doesn't count as harming the party; refusing to heal fellow adventurers does.

Players do have the right to harm their own characters by recklessness, as long as other characters aren't affected. For instance, a player can have his hero drink from a well that temporarily adds hit points, but ages his character. It doesn't matter if other players believe the action is in poor judgment. However, if the player's hero dies continually and needs resurrection, he is interfering with the enjoyment of other players, since resurrection is usually expensive and might affect a priest's character's statistics. Usually, it isn't necessary to arbitrarily overrule a player. Explain the problem, apply a bit of peer pressure, and he'll see the error of his ways.

More often, the problem is with the keyboard operator/party leader. Experienced gamers know the best strategies. It's easy to become impatient with a novice who continually tries strategies you know won't work. The leader must remember he was once a novice, too. He wouldn't know the best strategies if he hadn't made a few mistakes himself. Allowing a player to make a choice against your advice can only prove that you were right! The novice will learn the strategies and learn to listen to your sage advice.

A more subtle form of interference is excessive advice. More experienced gamers should definitely guide the novice players in the party, but don't let the new players rely entirely on your advice. There is no satisfaction in parroting someone else's suggestions for the whole game. Give each player plenty of opportunity to make his own decisions, even if the decision is only which monster to fight. You learn best from your own mistakes.

Distributing treasure

Knight: "I found the Protection Ring + 2, so I'm keeping it."

Cleric: "You have plate mail, and I'm wearing leather armor. I need it. Give it to me, or I won't cure your deafness."

Since characters must travel as a party, friendly rivalry over weapons and treasure must be kept to a dim roar, so it doesn't diminish the spirit of team work. Each character's success is inextricably linked to the survival of the party. A disgruntled cleric who chooses not to heal an arrogant knight will soon die an ignoble death in a zone where his magic is negated. Generic treasure, such as money, torches, and gold, should be divided in equal shares, regardless of each player's contribution to winning it. Dividing special weapons and magical items can be trickier.

Often, weapons and items are designed for a particular class of character. A magical Crossbow + 3 naturally belongs to the archer, even if the knight is still fighting with a club. Of course, the archer should be willing to offer or trade his outmoded Crossbow + 1 to another deserving character. Some items work equally well with several characters.

There are a couple of possible rules to choose from in dividing these items. The "Finders Keepers" rule works best if the computer automatically divides treasure, but there are two major drawbacks to "Finders Keepers." First, some games automatically award treasure to the character who is first in the marching order. Since rotating marching order might place vulnerable characters in the heart of combat, forget this rule unless the treasure is randomly divided. The second problem with "Finders Keepers" is that items aren't always used to their best advantage by the people who own them. Can a wizard use a magical broad sword?

A better alternative, if the group of players is capable of reasonable discussion, is to distribute prizes on the basis of need. A protective ring would belong to the character with the worst armor class. Magical items capable of duplicating combat spells should be used by characters with the least fighting ability. This method keeps the party balanced and increases everyone's chance of success. When all else fails, the designated leader decides who gets what. It's best not to resort to a leader's decision too often, since arbitrary assignment of treasure takes the fun out of the game.

Distributing labor

Player 1: "Hurry up! Let's go through the trapdoor!"

Leader: "Wait a minute. I have to map this room."

Player 2: "All right, it's mapped, let's go."

Leader: "Hold on, I have to look up the Levitation spell, in case there's a pit."

The other group members shouldn't sit

idly watching the leader operate the keyboard. There are other jobs to be divided among the players. Someone else should be in charge of mapping new territory. Again, this position requires some aptitude. Mapping can be difficult, especially when the mapper isn't at the keyboard.

Use care in choosing the navigator so the maps will be accurate. Many experienced gamers rely on memory rather than maps when they play, but this is a bad idea for group play. The idea is to keep everyone involved in the game, and other players can't use a map you keep in your head. Recording and interpreting clues are another player's responsibilities.

Remember that the game can't be won without completing the quests. The scribe should record clues accurately, noting the location and source of the information. Choose someone who writes legibly and makes clear notes other players can understand in his absence. He should offer his interpretations of the clues without hoarding the information or insisting everyone follow his suggestions. The final duty on the job roster is holding and using the game instructions and clues manuals.

Everyone should read the instructions manual to familiarize himself with all rules and objectives. During the game, one player keeps the manual for reference. The game manual often contains clues, and it always lists spells. Choose a player who will actually read the entire manual so he'll know where to look when you need information. You can't wait while he searches for a spell in the heat of combat. Of course, if you rotate keyboard operators, you'll need more than one player to be familiar with each position.

As you play, you'll find that some players are naturally more suited to some positions. To start, divide the positions according to character class. Knights, fighters, paladins, and archers make good keyboard operators and navigators. Sorcerers, mages, and clerics are well suited to recording clues and will naturally want the game's spell book (you might have to make copies of it for your group's use only). The general categories of game duties can be combined or divided to suit the number of players in your group. Try not to leave any players without a duty, or they're likely to become chaotic with boredom.

What's next?

Player 1: "There's the wizard's cave! Let's go in!"

Player 2: "No way. We're on a quest to find the Ring of Fire."

Player 3: "The map shows a dragon's lair. Let's go get some experience points."

Once you've created characters and distributed game duties, you're ready to play. Since you've discussed your ground rules and designated a leader, progress should be smooth in the beginning. As your characters gain experience and your explorations uncover more opportunities

for adventure, you may encounter a few minor conflicts. While many adventures must be completed in a specific order, some games are quite flexible. Adventurers may have trouble agreeing about what to do first—or second, or third.

The easiest solution is to let the leader decide. If you're rotating leaders, make it a rule that you always finish one quest before embarking on another. Otherwise, you'll make no progress as the focus changes from session to session. If you use a permanent leader, he must be flexible enough to try the other players' suggestions some of the time, or everyone will lose interest. The reckless adventurer may find himself at odds with his more cautious counterparts about game strategy. Always remember the purpose of the group effort is to better balance the party. Each player's ideas are worthy of consideration. If everyone sticks to the ground rules, your game-playing should be trouble free.

Time to play

Player 1: "I can't make it tonight. We'll have to play tomorrow."

Player 2: "Everyone else is here. We'll fill you in tomorrow."

Player 1: "You can't play without me. I'll miss everything!"

Unfortunately, even the most harmonious of parties occasionally runs into trouble with schedules. Devoted adventurers are often prone to spending grueling hours at a stretch exploring a game. Though the members of your party may want to spend as many hours working on a game as you do, the grim realities of everyday life may prevent them. Players may object mightily when you continue the adventure in their absence. On the other end of the scale, you may find some members of your party are more enthusiastic than you. Once you have involved them in your game, you may inherit permanent house guests for the duration of the game.

Decide by mutual agreement on time limits for gaming. Demanding that everyone be present whenever you play can draw the game out interminably. A better solution is to agree that experience points and treasure will be divided equally with the heroes of absent players.

Now that you have gathered a party and established a few ground rules, you are ready to begin. Your party of players will add a new dimension to fantasy role-playing games. Not only will you have an enthusiastic audience when you relate tales of battle, you'll have a team of strategists. Each member will strive to make his character the strongest or most powerful, so your party of adventurers will live up to its full potential. Have fun—and don't stay up too late.

Ω



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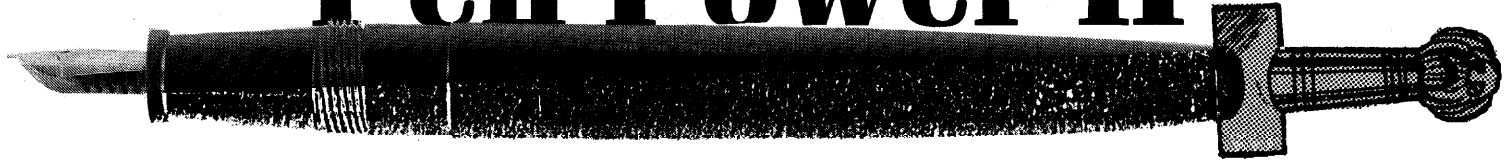
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Pen Power II



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by the DRAGON® Magazine staff

Once again, we are asking you, the loyal readers of DRAGON® Magazine, to give us some insight about you and how you feel about this magazine. We will use this information to tailor this magazine to your gaming needs. In addition, we are going to award prizes to 10 randomly selected respondents, and you'll be able to choose your own prize should you win!

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“Ready!”

New crossbows for old in the AD&D® game

by **Donald D. Miller**

Artwork by L. A. Williams

In the AD&D® game, the crossbow is a much maligned and underrated weapon. It has only slightly better range than the long bow, but with a notably lower damage potential and a much slower rate of fire. It is normally chosen only by low-level or destitute characters who cannot afford a bow, or by novice players who do not yet understand what a poor weapon this is within the game. This is hardly a realistic representation of the medieval crossbow.

Crossbows were used in China as early as 1200 B.C. and as hunting weapons in central Europe by 400 B.C. The historian Vegetius tells of Roman legions being armed with crossbows in A.D. 385. It was considered such a dangerous weapon that in 1139 Pope Innocent II banned its use by all Christians. This ban was later lifted for knights going on the Crusades, allowing them to use crossbows against the Saracens.

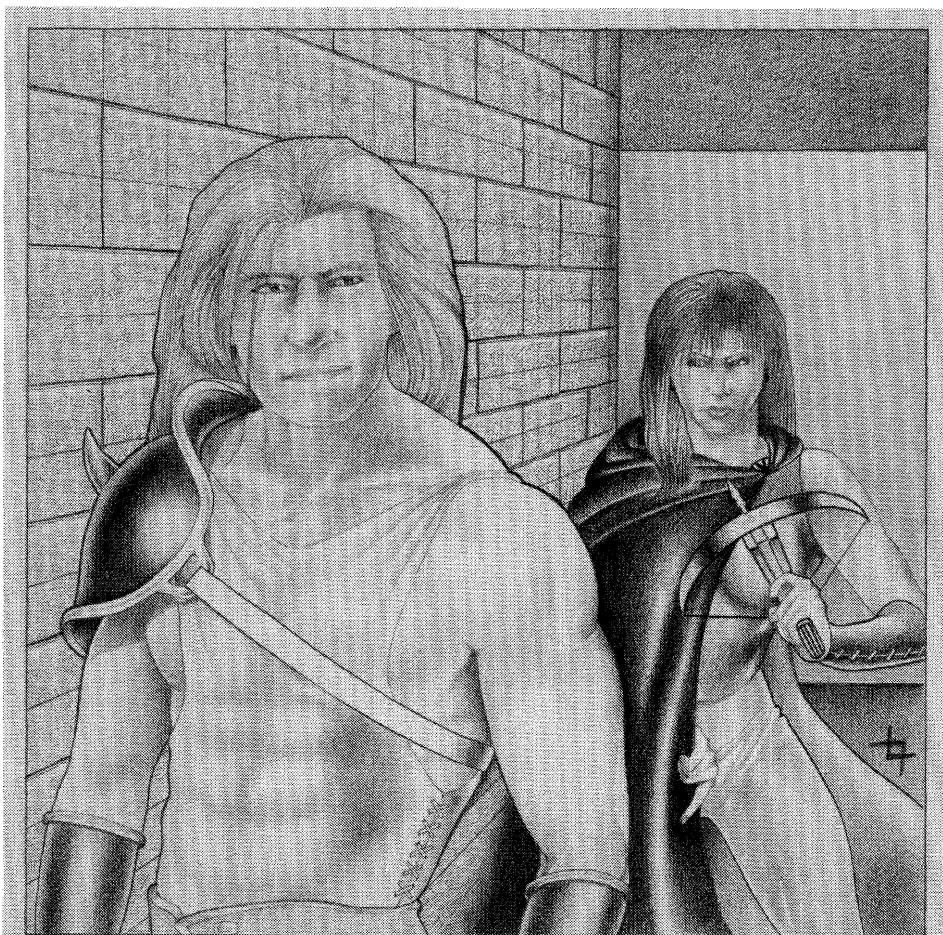
At 7 lbs. for a light crossbow and 14 lbs. for a heavy one, the crossbow is much harder to carry than a simple bow, at 2-3 lbs. It cannot fire nearly as fast, with rates of fire of 1/1 or 1/2 for light and heavy crossbows, respectively, against 2/1 for any bow. The crossbow is also more susceptible to water damage than a bow; immersion in water or exposure to rain lasting longer than five rounds requires that a bowstring be aired out in the sun for a full day and checked for rot, but this process takes 2-4 days for a whole crossbow. Because of its greater weight, a crossbow is not nearly as useful against moving objects and ought to suffer a -1 penalty on attack rolls against fast-moving targets (DMs must decide exactly what constitutes a fast-moving target; a man walking down a road is not such a target, while someone running for cover is). Note there is no “fast-moving” penalty if the target is moving directly toward or away from the crossbowman.

However, crossbows can be produced more cheaply than bows (an important point for a lord fielding an army), they require less training to use (DMs who require characters to spend time training

with weapons might allow proficiency with the crossbow in half the time required for the long bow), and they have greater range and penetrating power (i.e., do more damage). The crossbow can be cocked and loaded in advance, then kept at the ready. Because of its sturdy construction, this weapon might not be seriously damaged if used to parry an attack from an enemy’s weapon. Also, a crossbowman can use the stock of his weapon as a club (-1 to hit for clumsiness, but a hit doesn’t harm the weapon).

The crossbow consists of a small metal or wooden bow mounted horizontally on a wooden stock. A release nut is set in the center of the stock, and the bowstring is pulled back to catch on this nut. When the leverlike trigger is pressed, the nut shifts, releasing the string and firing the quarrel. Some crossbows have a groove carved in the center of the stock from the nut to the bow, to better control the quarrels flight.

Crossbows fire ammunition called quarrels or bolts. These look like small arrows, ranging from 1’ to 2’ long. Quarrels have



Hand crossbow

Aim! Fire!

only two vanes (feathers) set on opposite sides of the shaft, whereas arrows have three vanes set equally around the shaft. Arrows and throwing darts cannot be fired from crossbows, nor can a crossbow fire bolts of different sizes (light crossbows fire only light quarrels, heavy crossbows fire only heavy quarrels, etc.).

For those DMs who would like to increase the lore of crossbows and expand the options available to those who use them in the campaign world, I present the following information and examples. More

material is given in *DMGR3 Arms and Equipment Guide*, pages 63-67, and you may also wish to include the doubled crossbow and disk crossbow from "New Weapons for Old," in *DRAGON*® issue #169.

Hand crossbow: From the 13th to 15th centuries, Italy produced crossbows that were only 14" long with a bow 10" across. These weapons were easily concealed under cloaks or in the folds of robes; they were often used by assassins and were therefore outlawed in many

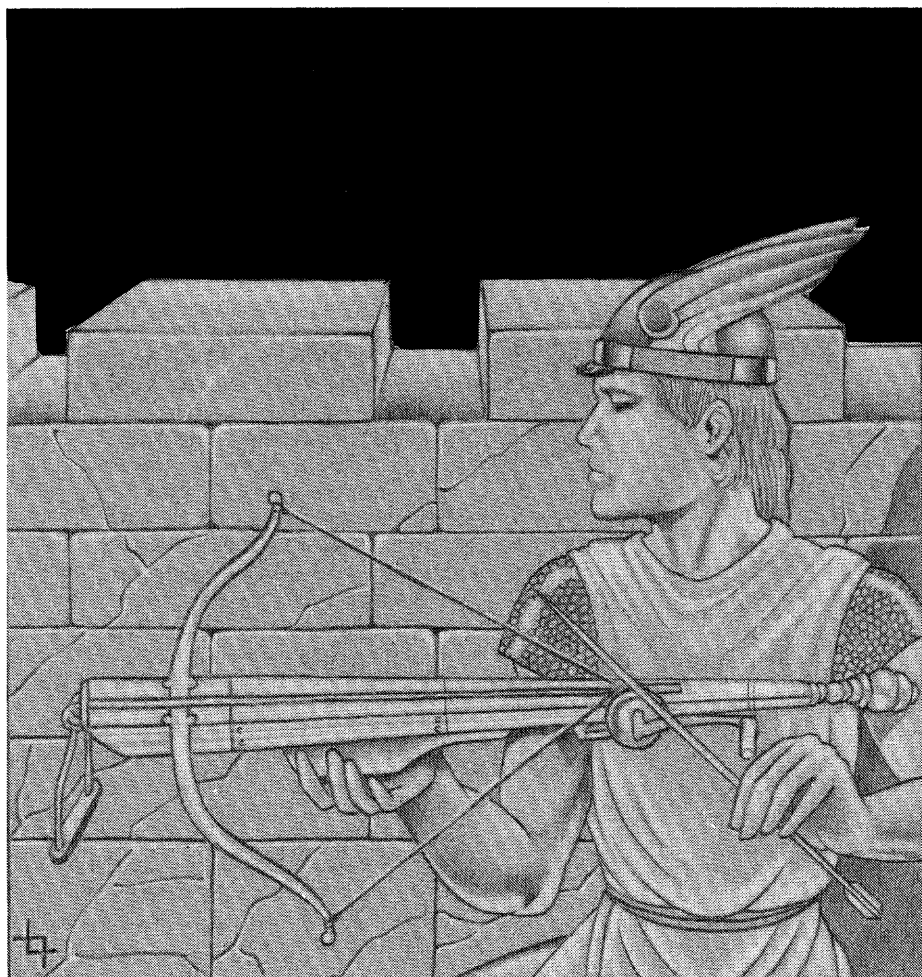
areas. Each is cocked by holding the stock or bow with one hand and pulling the string back with the other. Due to its light weight, the hand crossbow does not suffer a -1 penalty for attacking moving targets. The high price of this item (300 gp, as per the *Player's Handbook*, page 68) reflects its being sold only on the black market in most areas. If allowed to be sold openly, its price would fall to only 30 gp.

Hand-crossbow quarrels can be used as throwing darts in emergencies. They suffer a -2 on attack rolls and have only half the normal range of darts when thrown by hand.

Light crossbow: This was the earliest form of crossbow developed. It has a wooden bow and a draw of about 50 lbs. This weapon is cocked by bracing the bow and pulling the string back until it catches behind the release nut. This was the crossbow used by the Roman legions and the Mpangwe of Africa. If your characters are in a primitive area or if your campaign is set in an early time period, this will be the only crossbow available. The light crossbow can be held and fired using only one hand (-1 on attack rolls). If one is used in each hand, the attack penalty is cumulative with the penalties for attacking with two weapons (*Player's Handbook*, page 96).

Medium crossbow: The medium crossbow was introduced in the 13th century and had a composite bow of horn, sinew, and wood. It had a draw weight of 100 to 150 lbs. and was cocked by placing one foot in the stirrup at the crossbow's front and using both hands to pull back the bowstring. This was a common hunting weapon of medieval Europe.

Heavy crossbow: The heavy crossbow has a steel bow and first appeared in the 14th century. This weapons often had a draw weight of 500 lbs. or more and was cocked using a windlass (a miniature block and tackle). The windlass was attached to the weapon's stock, a hook was put over the bowstring, and the string was cranked back. The windlass was then removed and the crossbow was loaded with a quarrel. All of this contributed to the weapon's



Medium crossbow

Table 1
Revised Crossbow Statistics

Weapon	Cost (gp)	Weight (lbs.)	Size	Type	Speed factor	Damage (S-M/L)
Hand crossbow	300 gp	3*	S	-	5	
Hand quarrel	1 gp		S	P		1d3/1d2
Light crossbow	35 gp	7*	S	-	7	
Light quarrel	1 sp		S	P	-	1d4/1d4
Medium crossbow	40 gp	8*	M	-	8	
Medium quarrel	2 sp		S	P	-	1d6/1ds
Heavy crossbow	50 gp	14*	M	-	10	
Heavy quarrel	3 sp		S	P	-	1ds/1d10
Siege crossbow	100 gp	25	L	-	12	
Siege quarrel	5 sp	1/2	M	P	-	1d10/1d12

* These items weigh one-tenth of a pound each.

Table 2
Revised Crossbow Ranges

Weapon	Rate of fire	Ranges	
		M	L
Hand crossbow	1	4	6
Light crossbow	1	12	18
Medium crossbow	1/2	14	21
Heavy crossbow	1/3	16	24
Siege crossbow	1/3	18	27

slow rate of fire. The heavy crossbow was used as a military weapon throughout most of medieval Europe.

Siege crossbow: The siege crossbow

was a stronger version of the heavy crossbow with an improved steel bow and was first seen in the 15th century. This weapon had a draw weight often reaching

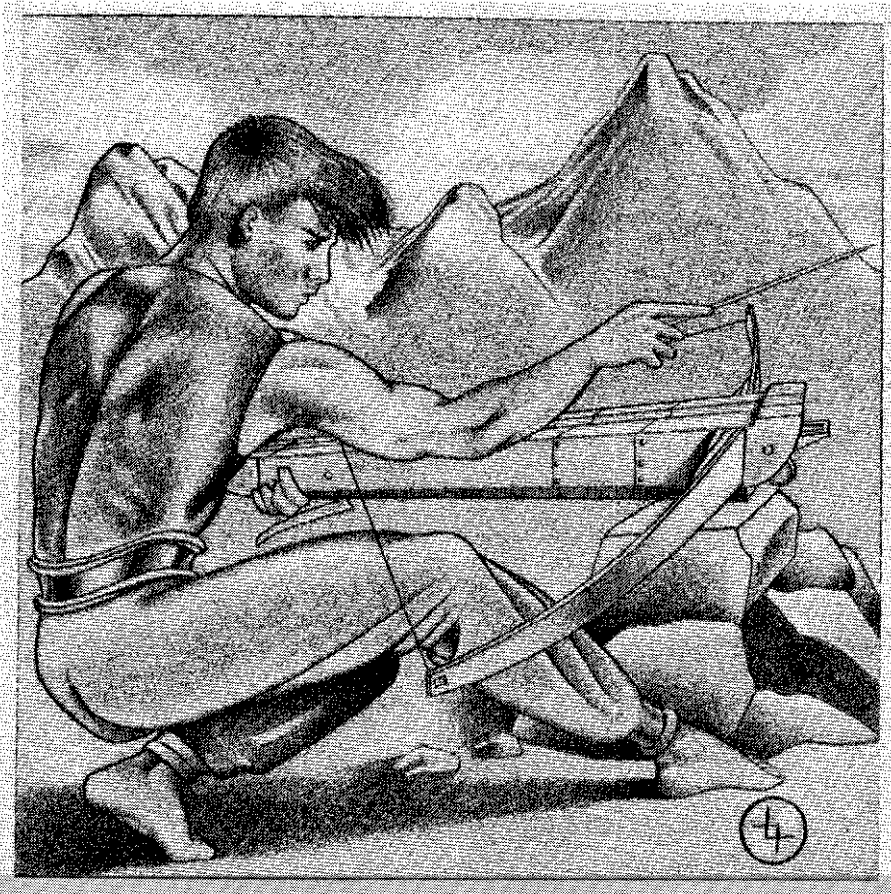
1,200 lbs. and was cocked using a windlass like the heavy crossbow. The siege crossbow was normally used by soldiers who would rest the weapon on a castle wall and fire at the attacking army. Any character not bracing a siege crossbow on a solid object (castle wall, boulder, fence post, etc.) will suffer a -1 attack penalty per range level (-1 at short, -2 at medium, and -3 at long) in addition to all normal range penalties. The siege crossbow was a very late development and should exist only in Renaissance-period campaigns. The improvements in metalworking that allowed its production also produced superior firearms, which soon rendered this weapon obsolete.

Example: Lord Oswerd spots an orc across an open field and breaks out his siege crossbow. After spending two rounds attaching the windlass, cranking back the bowstring, detaching the windlass, and loading the weapon, he is ready to fire. Since the orc is 200 yards away, he is at long range (-5 on his attack roll). Being in an open field, Lord Oswerd has nothing to rest his weapon on (-3). Seeing what's coming, the orc starts running for his life (-1). So, Lord Oswerd has a -9 penalty on his attack roll. If he hits, the orc will suffer 1d10 hp damage—likely enough to kill him.

Among demihumans, dwarves and gnomes are known to favor the crossbow. Dwarves prefer medium crossbows. They find the heavier ones too slow and the lighter ones lack high damage potential. Gnomes favor the light crossbow, finding anything heavier too bulky. Elves and halflings shun crossbows, finding them too cumbersome; considering their bonuses with other missile weapons, they are probably better off that way.

[*"Forum"* letters pertaining to crossbows may be found in DRAGON issues #167 (page 74), #175 (page 70), and #179 (pages 53-54). Crossbow-type weapons larger than siege crossbows are ballistae, which are well detailed in the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set's Concordance of Arcane Space, page 41.]

Ω



Siege crossbow

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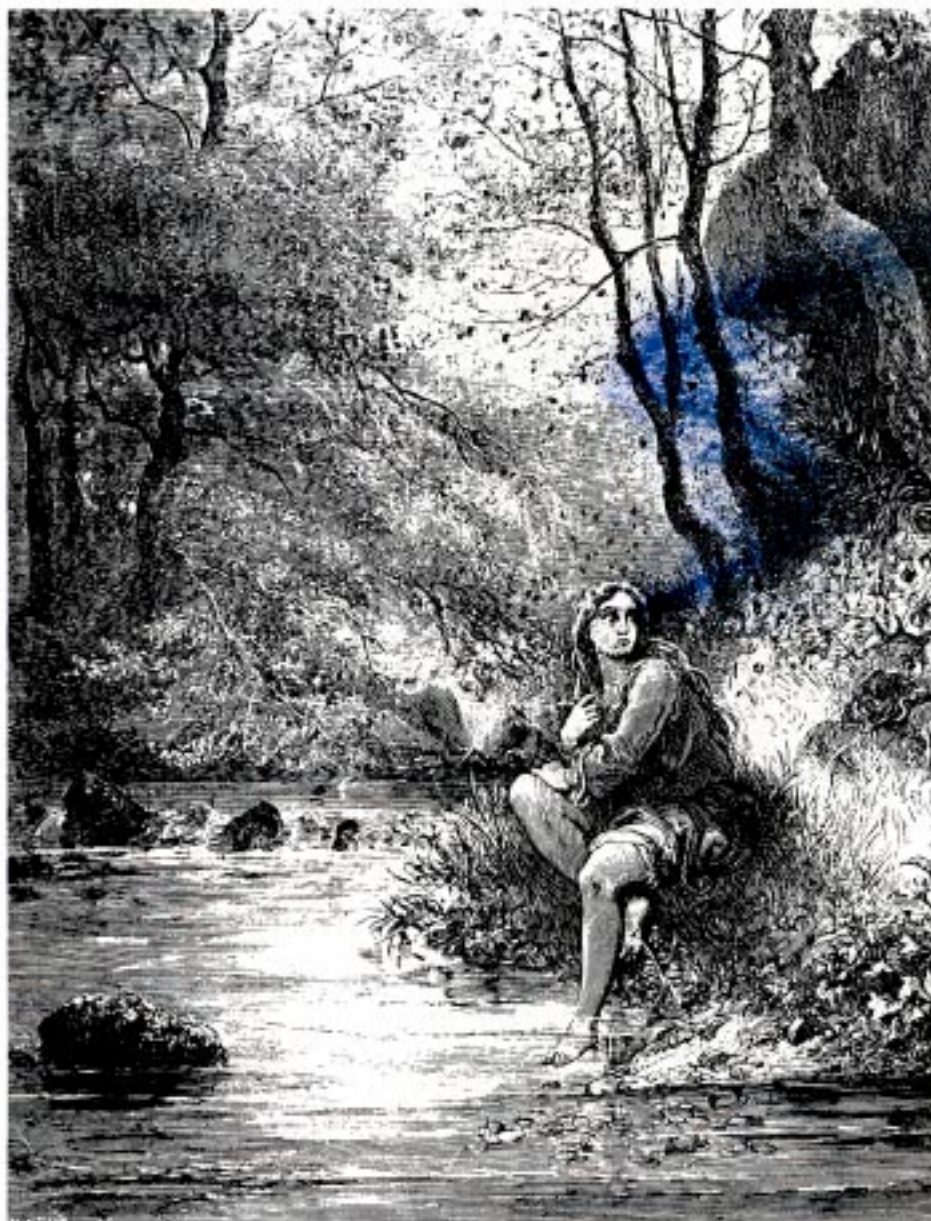
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Psionics

Giving three dimensions to psionics
in the AD&D®

2nd Edition game
by Jan Berrien Berends



Psionics in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game is an exciting element that adds color and vitality to any campaign. The rules in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* are fully functional. However, the rules alone are not sufficient to bring the full potential of psionics to life in a campaign. The true excitement of psionics is only realized when the DM uses all his power to describe psionics in vivid detail.

Just as combat in AD&D games is much more exciting if the DM describes what happens, so too are psionics more satisfying if the DM creates a detailed picture for the players. For example, when a player character wishes to establish contact with another creature, the DM can simply allow the player to make the power check and, if successful, tell the player that her PC has made contact. This system works fine, and in some situations it is the best to use. However, it often falls flat.

Wanda: (playing Grekor the psionist): I want to make contact with the biggest ogre.

DM: Okay, roll your power check.

Wanda: I made it. Now I want to use ESP.

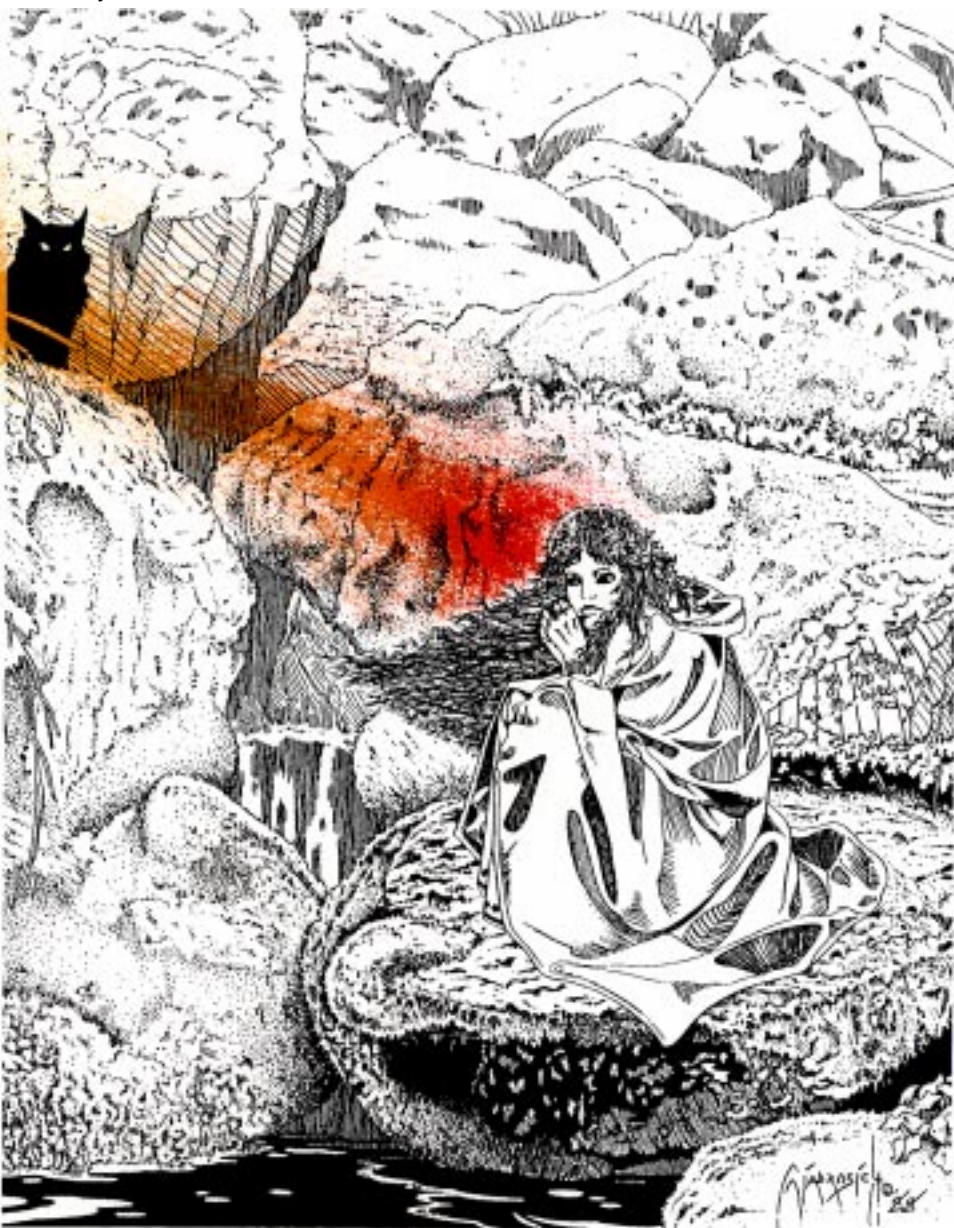
DM: Roll your power check.

Wanda: I made it.

DM: The ogre is thinking that it wants to smash you with its club.

In Living Color!

Artwork by Bob Giadrosich



Not very exciting, is it? The same sequence, however, can become much more intense with a little description on the DM's part.

Wanda: I want to make contact with the biggest ogre.

DM: Okay, you place your hands on your temples and send out an arm of your consciousness. To your psionic senses, the ogre's mind appears rather small and open, almost inviting you to enter. Make your power check.

Wanda: I make it. Now I want to use ESP.

DM: You are surprised at how easily your consciousness slips into the ogre's mind. Make your power check. [Wanda succeeds.] You get the feeling that there is not much in the ogre's mind beyond what you read. "Brabo crush! Brabo crush Grekor hard!" he thinks over and over to himself, gripping his club as he looks at you. His mind seems to be just barely able to cope with the thought, but he's eager for what he thinks will be an easy victory.

Clearly, this is a little more interesting. Of course, there are times when the simple method of declaring what power is being used and checking for success is preferable. In the heat of an exciting and important battle, a simple description (like the first one) is probably adequate. At other times, however, an even more detailed description is best. In this article, each discipline is examined for the best ways to enliven and enhance its use in a campaign.

Clairsentience

Clairsentient powers allow characters to sense things they would otherwise be unable to detect. They should always be given detailed descriptions. When a PC uses Clairvoyance or Clairaudience, describe the feeling she has as she sends her senses outward from herself. Perhaps there is a sound of rushing wind in her ears as she starts to use Clairaudience. And when her senses arrive at the desired site, describe incidental sensations first, to set the mood. For example:

Birds chirp cheerfully, and you hear the sounds of a soft breeze. "I love you," a young man's voice whispers. Giggles are the response.

The same applies to Clairvoyance:

Your first impression is that everything is dark. After a few seconds, your eyes adjust and you see a wall of wet stones. Your attention is drawn by a shadowy movement. Someone is walking, crouched and quietly, along the passage.

The same attention to detail should be used with all clairsentient powers. Here, Aura Sight is used on an 8th-level chaotic-good fighter by a 4th-level psionicist:

The warrior's aura is a fiery red, flaming glow. The intensity of the light reveals that he is quite powerful, having about twice your personal power. This particular shade of red is characteristic of a fierce, noble individualism; he is generous and sincere, if not disciplined.

Psychokinesis

Because psychokinesis tends to have primarily physical effects, description is usually taken care of by describing the action. However, it is always good to describe how the psionicist himself feels.

The stone is quite heavy. You feel an almost physical strain in your mind as you lift it, as if your muscles are tensing. It seems that you can move it only ever so slowly, lifting it out of the way of the narrow pass. At times, you feel

like you just might drop it, but at the last second, you always manage to catch it.

Also, it is important to remember to appeal to all the senses when you describe the effects of the power, such as with Control Wind:

The wind whips up, wrapping your clothing tightly around your body. There is a great sound as the air around you moves faster and faster, chilling you and slightly upsetting your balance.

Here, someone uses Levitation:

You feel a refreshing lightness as you rise off the ground. The orderly garden takes on an interesting perspective as you look down upon the riot of color within it. As the castle grounds fall away below you, you feel the air cool a bit. The scent of pollen from nearby maple trees tickles your nose on a breeze that rushes past.

Psychometabolism

The obvious sense to which this discipline appeals is touch, as the psionicist feels the changes that happen to his body. However, you can enhance the description by lending detail to the processes that must happen in the psionicist's mind. With Animal Affinity, for example, the psionicist has to allow his psyche to get in touch with the animal part of his nature.

You bend your mind inward, searching for the eagle within you. Images of soaring and hunting flood your mind. You feel your arms change into wings, your bones stretching and becoming thinner, and the change feels right. Wings are so much more practical and real, you think. You stretch out your wings, admiring the reach of your wing tips and the perfection of your feathers.

In order to use psychometabolic powers, the psionicist must cease to view his body as a physical reality and see it as a psychic entity. Thus, when a psionicist uses Graft Weapon, the psionicist must feel himself and the weapon as two malleable elements of psychic reality:

You heft the rapier in your hand. It feels sharp, true, and sturdy, perfectly balanced. It ceases to be merely a piece of metal and comes alive as you hold it. It feels warm and accepting. You close your eyes and see the blade as a beam of light. Your hand and arm, too, be-

comes a curving beam of light. After a bit of concentration, you feel that the two beams of light are now just one long beam, extending forward from your arm. Opening your eyes and looking down, you see that the blade is now a real part of you.

Psychoportation

Like clairsentient powers, many psychoportive powers become more vivid if the entire scene is described. If a character teleports, she will naturally spend a few moments acclimating herself to her new surroundings. Even if the surroundings are familiar, the minor shock of having all sensory input change suddenly is slightly disorienting.

You blink your eyes and glance about you. The bright light hurts your eyes, and you stagger, expecting the floor to be rough and tilted, but your footing is firm now. You are overcome with relief to be out of the dismal, perpetual twilight of the Keep of Maror. The warmth of the sun feels wonderful, and the sounds of the familiar, nearby brook bring to mind the early years of your life, when all your adventures took place in a broad meadow outside your parents' house.

If the psionicist has traveled a great distance, her head might reel and her legs might be shaky for a few seconds. This need not be enough to cause her any real problem, but they still add to the effect in the player's mind.

Powers that teleport other beings, such as Banishment and Teleport Other, can give the psionicist a glimpse into the locale to which the other being is sent. Summon Planar Creature can show the psionicist an image of the plane from which the creature arrives. Such glimpses can be quite exciting, and the DM can even use them to further plots or introduce interesting adventures. Alternatively, they can just be used to touch up the description of the power.

Telepathy

This is where a DM's description can really make or break the excitement of psionics. Exploring other beings' minds can be one of the most entertaining things a PC will ever do. Even if the PC is just contacting a mind to use Psionic Blast or Psychic Crush, a description of the mind is in order. Ask yourself what the mind would look like. What substance is it made of? Does it look like some kind of landscape? What are its features?

Suppose a PC tries to contact a zombie. The PC would, of course, have nothing to gain, because a zombie is mindless. How-



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ever, this is an opportunity that a DM should not resist. Describe the mind as, say, a gray bowl of cold oatmeal in a dark kitchen. As the PC tries to contact the mind, he must mentally dive into the oatmeal. If he does so, he flounders about for a few seconds, soon discovering that there is no mind as such to contact. No one is home! What could have been a humdrum response of "You can't use your power on a zombie" has become an interesting event.

Successful contacts are, of course, much more exciting. Perhaps the psionicist will find her consciousness walking through a twisted maze, with dark, repressed secrets lurking behind every corner. Perhaps she sees herself flying high above a miniature planet on which the continents and geographical features are the memories and thoughts of the individual.

One interesting technique is to ask the psionicist what form she wants her consciousness to take as it tries to contact and explore another being's mind. She would do well to shape her mind into either something that the being would fear or something it would trust. For example, if she were trying to contact an elderly wizard, she might shape her mind into an embodied apparition of Death, from which the aging wizard would shy away. On the other hand, if she were trying to contact a ranger, she might shape herself into a

handsome, sturdy horse and trot into his mind. Animal forms are a good way to express the shape the psionicist's mind takes.

Another way to approach it is to ask the PC to describe how he intends to get in to the subject's mind. Against a sturdy dwarf, the psionicist might try to barge into the stronghold of the dwarf's psyche. Against an experienced diplomat, the psionicist might mentally bow and wait to be "invited" in.

This is not, of course, to say that the being who is being contacted will necessarily perceive the images that the psionicist has, but presumably on some level the consciousness of the subject will interact with the consciousness of the psionicist. Particularly creative PCs might, at the DM's discretion, be given bonuses to their power check rolls for intelligent and appropriate responses.

When a character uses a psionic defense mode, it is a good idea to describe a physical appearance that is appropriate. For Tower of Iron Will, obviously, a description of a tall, strong tower would be in order. Intellect Fortress would be a broad, sturdy stronghold. A psionicist up against Mind Blank would wander through a barren landscape, aware that there were hidden features surrounding him but only able to see the wide, empty expanse of desolate plains.

When a psionicist uses a power to alter any creature's mind in some way, describe how it is done. With Telepathic Projection, the psionicist might have to adjust emotional levers. With Aversion, the psionicist might have to erect a mental statue of the object of Aversion, surround it with barbed wire, and set angry mental guard dogs about it.

Conclusion

Vivid descriptions mean the difference between another bunch of statistics to look after and an entirely new and exciting dimension added to a campaign. The effort to enhance the descriptions is not necessarily small, but the depth that such effort can bring is well worth the trouble.

Literature can be a great source of ideas for enhancing the descriptions of psionics. There are many science-fiction and fantasy books available that present psionics in an entertaining way. TSR's new DARK SUN™ book, *The Verdant Passage* by Troy Denning, offers excellent descriptions of psionics based on the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. Another good book is *Queen of Angels*, by Greg Bear. Although the "psionic" interaction in this book is based entirely on "science," the book is a great source for descriptions of living minds as landscapes or worlds. Ω

Convention Calendar

Continued from page 38

Utah. Events include role-playing, SF&F and historical miniatures games. Other activities include guests, a painting contest, and dealers. Registration: \$20/weekend before July 31; \$24 at the door. Dealers are welcome. Write to: Comics Utah, 258 E. 100 S., Salt Lake City UT 84111; or call: (801) 328-3300.

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by Steven E. Schend

HE MARVEL®-PHILE

From within the lands of Doom



By now, the *Lands of DR. DOOM™* boxed set for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game should be out on the shelves at your local game and comic-book stores. As with many of our projects, there is not always room for every last little detail that we'd like to put into our products; there's only so much we can fit into a box! This month, I've compiled material I had to edit out of this boxed set for space considerations—a few random bits of technology that wouldn't fit into the catalog of Doom's gadgets—and now present it to you, the readers of DRAGON® Magazine.

Even though Dr. Doom made these gadgets, and the "Availability" section with each item tells you where the item can be found and in what quantities, there is no reason you can't pick up these items and use them for your own high-tech villains. Even better, perhaps the villains in your campaign gained the items by stealing them from Dr. Doom himself. This could lead to interesting encounters if your master villains come to the players' heroes for protection from the Lord of Latveria.

Anesthetic nose plugs

These small devices are very basic in design and equally so in effect. When inserted in the nasal passages of a human or other oxygen-breathing creature, the plugs allow air to pass through them but introduce a strong knock-out gas into the air flow, keeping the victim unconscious.

Powers: Knock-Out Gas. The nose plugs release an Incredible (40) Intensity knock-out drug into the nasal passages of the victim. When first inserted, a conscious victim can make an Endurance FEAT roll against the intensity of the gas to resist its effects, continuing the Endurance FEAT rolls each round until failure indicates unconsciousness. The victim will awaken 1-3 rounds after the plugs are removed.

First appearance: FANTASTIC FOUR #352.

Material strength: Poor (4).

Tech rank: Incredible (40).

Availability: It is very likely that Doctor Doom has at least 10 functional sets of these nose plugs within Castle Doom.

Deflection staff

This 6'-long metal quarterstaff is filled with circuitry allowing it to absorb the most punishing blow without breaking. It has never been used by Dr. Doom, though its capabilities as a defensive weapon are tremendous.

Powers: Force Absorption/Deflection. The staff is designed to absorb up to an Unearthly (100) amount of physical or Force damage directed against it, deflecting such damage away from the wielder of the staff. If the wielder can succeed at an Agility FEAT roll (Yellow or Red result needed), he can also successfully deflect a distance Force attack. The staff itself is powerless, fueling its circuitry by absorbing the kinetic energy directed against it.

Limitation: Due to the kinetic energy absorbing properties of its circuitry and makeup, the deflection staff is useless as an offensive weapon. It absorbs any damage it might do to an opponent, dealing only Feeble (2) Blunt damage regardless of the strength of the wielder.

First appearance: FANTASTIC FOUR #352.

Material strength: Incredible (40).

Tech rank: Monstrous (75).

Availability: The only working model of this item exists in Dr. Doom's personal armory in Castle Doom. There are rumors that Doom is adapting the design of the staff, allowing it to absorb force and redirect it on contact with a target, though this is idle speculation.

Entropic inducer

Developed recently during Dr. Doom's exile, this bulky pistol resembles the standard blaster Doom carries in his belt holster. Its ability to scramble nervous-system impulses is effective against nearly any living creature, though its most lethal uses are saved for the hated Reed Richards' elastic form ("My entropic inducer will rearrange your body structure to a state of maximum disorganization!").

Powers: Nerve Scramble Effect. With a range of four areas, the entropic inducer shoots a blast that effectively overloads the victim's nervous system. The highly specialized energy beam acts as an Amazing (50) Energy attack in terms of body armor or energy resistances, and it cannot be absorbed by artificial or natural powers without taking effect (e.g., Iron Man cannot absorb this energy to power his armor without scrambling his armor's circuits.).

The energy causes the victim to suffer Incredible (40) Energy damage and to lose control over all voluntary muscles, making him fall and be effectively immobilized. Due to the nerve scrambling, the victim's muscles are overloaded with stimuli and do not respond to normal control for 2-20 rounds. Victims with any Elongation or Size Manipulation powers find their bodies

rapidly fluctuating in size or shape as their powers are scrambled for 4-40 rounds.

Endurance FEAT rolls can be made against the Amazing Intensity of the energy, and success allows the player to reduce the time of the effect by 1d10 rounds (minimum of one round of effect).

First appearance: FANTASTIC FOUR #352.

Material strength: Excellent (20).

Tech rank: Monstrous (75).

Availability: Doom has tried to use this item on only one occasion, but he has constructed three working models. One model of the entropic inducer is kept in each of his castles (Castle Doom in Doomstadt, the capital of Latveria; the Citadel of Doom in southeastern Latveria; and the Fortress of Doom in New York state).

Null-time sequencer

Though Dr. Doom has developed his own methods and mechanisms for time travel, the null-time sequencer is the design of some other inventor from outside the known universe. During Dr. Doom's undocumented jaunts through other dimensions and times, he "acquired" these mechanisms to study. Used for a short length of time in a duel against Mister Fantastic, the null-time sequencers brought Doom to the attention of the Time Variance Authority (TVA).

Powers: Time Travel. A null-time sequencer allows the wearer to shift through time and temporarily inhabit space "outside" of time. The sequencers operate at Amazing (50) efficiency, allowing the wearer up to five rounds of activity outside of the current flow of time. The longest jump through time allowable with a null-time sequencer is a little over one hour into the past or the future. Note that the null-time sequencers do not move the wearer through space, only time; wielders seem to teleport by shifting outside time and moving to the desired location (seemingly instantaneously).

First appearance: FANTASTIC FOUR #352.

Material strength: Excellent (20).

Tech rank: Shift Y (200).

Availability: Doom used a pair of null-time sequencers in his duel against Reed Richards, though Doom's was worn at the end of the battle by a disguised Kristoff. The sequencer worn by Mister Fantastic was impounded by the TVA. Doom destroyed the only remaining time sequencer to avoid detection and interference by the TVA. It is highly probable that Doom at least created a set of blueprints or plans to gain knowledge of alternate time-travel technology.

Quark instability condenser

Touted by Doom as his promethium armor's most powerful weapon, the quark instability condenser was developed after Doom left Otherplace with his magic-based

armor. Extremely effective against cyborgs and robots, the condenser (incorporated into one of Doom's gauntlets) uses metal and electrical systems against its victims, causing extreme pain and disruption.


Powers: Quark Destabilizing Pulse. By somehow harnessing a fraction of the binding energies of atomic nuclei and any free energies around or in the target, this weapon causes variable damage to its targets. Against normal, nonpowered beings, this beam causes Amazing (50) Energy damage. Any targets with innate physical (but not mental) powers must add their highest power rank to the Amazing damage. For example, the pulse adds Unearthly damage to this amount (Shift X (150) total) when used against the Hulk by harnessing some of the energy from the Hulks strength. For any armored, robotic, or cybernetic target, add the highest power rank to the damage as above, but a Red Endurance FEAT roll is needed to prevent paralysis of the mechanical systems for 2-20 rounds (White or Green results on this FEAT roll signify permanent dysfunction or destruction of specific system; Yellow or Red results equal success). Iron Man's armor would take Shift X (150) damage from the pulse, and he would need to make the Endurance FEAT roll to save his armor from destruction.

First appearance: FANTASTIC FOUR #352.

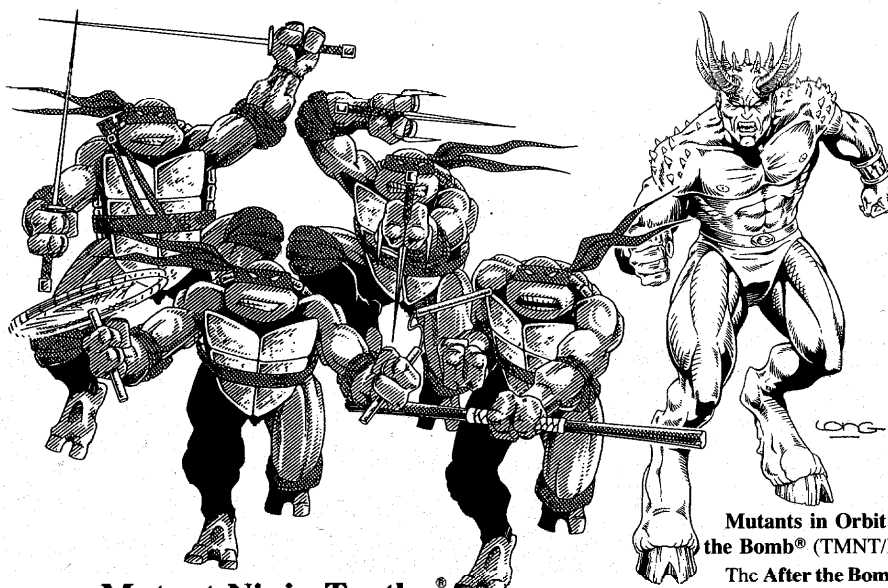
Material strength: Incredible (40).

Tech rank: Shift Y (300).

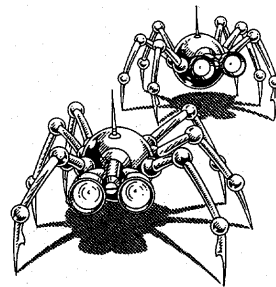
Availability: There was only one working model of the condenser, and it was placed in the mock-up promethium armor worn by Kristoff at the end of Doom's time-duel. Planning to sacrifice Kristoff and the armor to the TVA, Doom certainly has blueprints for the construction of another (though whether this is one of his own designs or something stolen from another time or place is unknown) hidden in his library or lab in Castle Doom.

Next month, I'll cover yet another corner of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, but I'll continue to add in bits and pieces of Dr. Doom's technology and other sundries to spice up everyone's game campaigns. Keep sending your comments to: The MARVEL-Phile, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We'd like to know your thoughts on the current direction of the column and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game line in general. 

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DRAGON 83





he flute was white as ivory, white as bone.

It had been made from a dragon's hollow wingbone, found one day by a shepherd in a mountainside cave. The bones had lain gleaming in the darkness, the high-arched ribs, the skull

with its deep hollow sockets, the razor-edged teeth. Yet it was only one delicate wingtip that he took home to the sod-roofed hut where he lived on the mountain, to spend the long summer evenings patiently boring the fingerholes.

When it was finished he took it outside and blew the first tentative note. The sound was thrillingly clear, high and light. Soon, if he shut his eyes while he played, it almost seemed that he could see dragons soaring, their eyes like jewels, vast wings extended to catch the updraft from the sunwarmed valleys far below.

Summer ended, and when the sky turned gray and the cold wind began to blow down from the peak, the shepherd gathered his animals and went down into the valley. Within days the trails were blocked by snow, and now was the time to sit by the fire in the company of other men. From time to time, when the tavern in the village was full of laughter and dancing, the shepherd would take out his flute and join in with the viol and recorder while the villagers skipped and rollicked to the well-known country tunes. It was a good way to pass the winter evenings and earn a tankard or two of thick brown ale.

But when the snow melted and the new grass came green on the mountain, he gathered up his newly shorn flock to drive it back up to the summer pasture. Now, once again, his songs were of dragons and flight. They seemed to come from the heart of the flute itself, as if the hollow bone retained an echo of the dragon's own voice.

So he sat and played on the mountainside one day when suddenly a black shadow seemed to blot out the sun. As his sheep ran bleating in mindless panic, he looked up to see the vast shape of a dragon plunging down at him, talons extended, tail lashing the sky in a frenzy of rage. Then he heard its voice in his mind, even as he dropped to the ground in a futile effort to evade those claws: *Mlaka-zar! My mate! Death! Death! Who killed him? Who has his bones?*

The shepherd in his desperate terror cried aloud, "No!" and felt the wind of the dragon's passage engulfing him in its hot, sulphurous scent as he awaited the piercing agony of the talons seizing his flesh. But instead he rolled free, cowering on the ground as the dragon hovered directly overhead, the beating of its wings battering him like a gale. *My mate! I heard the voice of his bones!*

"The shepherd in his fear got to his knees, stammering, "I . . . found the bones in a cave. I took only one—this one—to make a flute. I never killed . . . never . . ."

Slowly the dragon lowered itself to the ground, transfixing the trembling man with its gaze, red tongue licking in and out of its mouth. *Yes, this is his, this is his voice. Show me. Show me the rest of the bones.*

He led, the dragon followed, claws scoring the earth of the mountainside to bare stone. The cave was above the grass line, a place the shepherd had found the year before

The Dragonbone Flute

by Lois Tilton

Illustrations by Bob Walters

while climbing up to retrieve a strayed lamb. It was then he had spotted the break in the rock and the dim gleam of fleshless bone inside.

The dragon was only barely able to squeeze its bulk through the opening of the cave. The bones lay as the shepherd had found them, as they must have lain for tens of years to be stripped and worn so white. The shepherd felt the cry of the dragon's grief: *Mlakazar!*

He began to plead for his life, "You can see how long ago it must have been. I swear! I meant no harm! I never touched—never took but the one bone. Oh, forgive!"

The dragon lowered its head in sorrow. The shepherd could see now that it was old and a female, her blue-green hide and scales worn. Her eyes were pallid opals, red-veined with age. *Let me hear*, she said at last. *Let me hear the voice of my mate.*

So the shepherd took his flute from his belt and with shaking hands began to play. He played the song of flight, the song of freedom in the air, glorying in the strength of his wings. He played from the flute's heart, not knowing how he did, and beside him the dragon wept huge golden tears.

His voice lives again, she said at last.

"I meant no harm," the shepherd said again, uncertainly. "I was alone up here on the mountain. I thought, a little music, a song or two . . ."

Yes, said the dragon. *I know what it is to be alone.* And after a moment she spread her wings and beat her way into the sky.

The shepherd immediately put down the flute and began to search the mountainside anxiously for his flock, hoping they had not all plunged to their deaths in their panicked rush from descending death. He glanced nervously up at the dragon, soaring about a distant peak, well aware that she could easily swallow a sheep with a single snap of her jaws.

It took three days to gather in the flock, scattered as they had been. And for days after that he did not dare touch the flute for fear of the dragon, that it might return and devour them. Yet from time to time he could see her far-off shape wheeling above him in the sky, bringing back memories of the song of flight, and finally he realized that nothing he did could endanger his sheep or protect them if the dragon wished him harm. So he let the dead dragon's voice live again, and he was no longer alone on the mountain.

But as the summer days grew longer, the presence of the dragon had other consequences. One day an armed man rode up to the high pasture. A squire rode with him, leading a much larger stallion bearing weapons and armor, most conspicuously a lance fully twelve feet long.

The shepherd pulled off his cap as the knight beckoned him over. "Herdsman! Here! What do you know of the drake?"

"Sir?"

"The dragon, lout! I've had word there's a dragon been spotted up in these mountains. Prime trophy! Looking for his lair. Well?"

The shepherd glanced nervously up into the empty sky, then shook his head. "No, Sir. No dragon up here, Sir." As the knight scowled, he added, "I couldn't stay up here

with my sheep if there was a dragon on the mountain, Sir. Not with my sheep."

The horseman cursed and turned his glare onto his squire, dismounting. "It's getting late. I'll stay here the night. Go fetch one of those lambs."

The shepherd protested in vain as his lamb was slaughtered and spitted over his own fire. The knight only threw him a coin and ordered him to stop his complaints. In the morning the unwelcome visitors rode on, but the shepherd knew they would not be the last.

That winter, when he led his flock down from the mountain, the villagers pressed him with questions of their own, for they had seen the far-off shape of the dragon soaring high among the peaks. But the shepherd would admit nothing. Only, at last, that nothing had been at the sheep, no dragon, no eagle, no stray pack of wolves. And as they could see for themselves that the flock had not noticeably diminished, the villagers could only shake their heads.

But the shepherd kept mostly to himself throughout that winter, nursing a solitary ale at the side of the fire, and when the patrons of the tavern called for a song from his flute, he shook his head, saying he had lost it on the mountain.

In the spring, he drove his flock out almost before the snow had cleared the trails. Never had the mountain air seemed so fresh and clean, the sunshine so bright. And in the far, far-off distance, a speck of dark flew against the glistening snowcaps, a dragon soaring on outspread wings. His heart lifted at the sight.

She descended almost as soon as he had reached his pasture, with a stiff rustle of leathery wings. *Play, shepherd, play. Let me hear his voice again.* And the shepherd put the flute of bone to his mouth and let the song of flight spill out.

"He was your only mate?" he asked her once.

The dragon shook her scarred, blue-scaled head. *A mate is for life.*

"For life," the shepherd said sadly, thinking of the churchyard where he had buried his wife so many years ago, before he went up onto the mountain. "Yes, it is the same with some of us."

The dragon was ancient, even for one of her kind. Her leathery wings were scarred, her scales broken and cracked. The shepherd was concerned, for all her immense size, thinking of errant knights and the cruel steel heads of their lances. "This place is dangerous for you," he urged her, but again and again the dragon would return. *Play, shepherd. Let his voice live again.*

Then indeed rumors spread that a dragon had returned to the mountains. Knights and other adventurers would make their way to the high pasture in search of the great head for a trophy, the fabled gold of the hoard. Always the shepherd would show them the flock grazing placidly and unmolested on the tender grass. "I've been grazing this flock up here for half a man's lifetime. Think you that I'd bring my sheep to a dragon's lair?"

So the season passed, and the one after. Each spring the shepherd climbed the mountain trails more slowly. The dragon's eyes grew more dim.

Then one spring the sky was empty when the shepherd

arrived at the high pasture with his flock. He went to bed that night with a heavy heart, and his flute was silent. But in the morning when he opened the door of his hut she was waiting for him, steaming in the mists. The huge head hung low, and her wings were tattered. *Play, shepherd. Let me hear him one last time.*

He played, and the music of the flute soared higher and lighter than ever. He played until his breath was exhausted, while the dragon's golden tears ran silently from the faded veined opal of her eyes.

When he was finished, she began to creep away with painful slowness, dragging her ruined wings. The shepherd knew her destination. He followed until she came to the cave where her mate's bones lay. Before she crawled inside, squeezing her bulk through the narrow opening, she turned one last time to face the shepherd. *He was black! Bright black! Mlakazar!*

He waited until sunset colored the mountaintops, but she never emerged again.

The shepherd returned to his solitary existence on the mountain, to his sheep and their new lambs. From time to time he would take out the dragonbone flute and play a few notes, but the sky remained empty.

Then one day in late summer he felt a strange stirring in his heart. He put the flute to his mouth and played the old song of flight, the song of the dragon in his youth and power, soaring on the highest currents of the wind.

At first the shepherd thought he must be dreaming. The sky was full of dragons, wings outstretched, their jewel-tone scales glinting in the sunlight. He blinked, and the flute almost fell from his hands, but the dragons were still there and he could hear their voices in his mind, crying, *Flight! Flight!*

Then, as they dove closer, he saw that these dragons were each no larger than a swan, and he realized they must be newly hatched. *Flight!* they called. *Flight! Flight!* And he played for them again, watching with renewed joy as they swooped and plunged and tumbled in the air. Though he spoke to them, they made no answer, only repeating the same cry.

The next morning, the shepherd once again made the climb to the cave near the mountain's peak. His steps were slower than they had been when he first made this ascent and found a cave full of dry white bones. But this time dragons played above his head.

The immense bulk of a dragon does not decay quickly, even in the summer heat, and the shepherd had to tie a scarf over his face before he could enter the dark, narrow space of the cave. But as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he was able to make out what he had sought—the precious broken, gold-veined shards of the dragons' eggs, incubated long months in the decomposing warmth of their mother's remains. His heart raced at the first sight of so much wealth, but at last he left the cave as empty-handed as he had come. How could he sell them, even downriver in the marketplace? How could he let the world know of their existence?

Dragons flew over his head as he climbed slowly back down the mountain.

There were twelve of them—gold and green and russet

and blue and a solitary jet-brilliant black. Their eyes were bright, their wings supple and unscarred. They grew rapidly in the waning summer days, preying on the smaller beasts of the mountainside. As their wings became stronger they went farther and farther from the cave, until they were flying from peak to peak, higher and higher, until they soared above the most lofty snowcaps.

Yet always they returned to the mountain where they had been born, to the sound of the shepherd's dragonbone flute.

But there came a day in autumn, when the grass was turning coarse and yellow, when the shepherd came upon the carcass of one of his yearling lambs on an outcrop of rock, torn open and half-devoured. The marks of a dragon's talons were clearly visible on the remains.

Despite the shepherd's increased vigilance, several days later another lamb was missing. He grieved, knowing that by the next spring the dragons would be grown strong enough to carry off a mature ram. Now at last he felt the bitter truth of the answer he had always made to the questing knights, that he would not be able to pasture his flock on the mountain if there were dragons laired nearby.

That fall he drove his sheep down to the valley before the first snowflakes flew in the sky. Some of the villagers shook their heads and wondered aloud how many more years the old shepherd would be able to spend all alone up on the mountainside. A few of them suggested that he ought to hire a boy to run after the sheep. To all of them the shepherd made scant response. He sat alone through the winter evenings by the fireside of the tavern, and when people spoke of dancing, none of them seemed to remember the sweet, lively music of the bone flute, lost so many years ago.

Then one evening, as night was coming on, there was a commotion outside the tavern: the stamping of horses and the ring of steel. The innkeeper bustled, shouting for his sons to tend the beasts, his maids to look lively in the kitchen and make up the best bed for the noble knight and his servant.

The customers nearest the door hurried outside, followed quickly by the rest. The shepherd left his seat last of all, dread in his heart. The crowd had gathered thickly around the horses, hindering the tavern's boy in his efforts to lead them into the stable. It was only at the last moment that the shepherd caught a glimpse of what was tied across the largest mount's back, a dragon as large as the horse itself, wings trussed up so they would not drag on the ground, the jewel-tones of its eyes gone dull and its scales still lustrous, gleaming black, the rarest of dragon-colors.

Never again would his wings bear him up into the sky, never again would he experience the pure joy of flight or ever know the long, loyal happiness of a mate.

Soon the knight came into the tavern, followed by the admiring company, where the landlord himself served him his ale. He was a young fellow, fair and flushed with pride, not at all reluctant to boast of his deed in slaying the drake.

"He flew at me with his claws all extended, mouth wide open, hissing—"

"Breathing fire?" one of the serving maids asked eagerly.

"Well," the knight admitted, reluctantly compelled to honesty, "not exactly." He took a deep swallow of his ale. "I couched my lance. The drake came at me, and I spitted him like a charging boar. The point of my lance ran in below his ribs and out between his wings. The force drove my mount to his knees." The knight was on his feet with the excitement of his own tale. "I jumped clear, pulled my sword—"

The crowd exclaimed at the bright ring of steel, stepping back as he pulled his blade free, reenacting the epic battle. "But the drake was already dead. Killed with one blow!"

The shepherd at the back of the room shook his head in sorrow. "Young and foolish, young and foolish," he thought. What had the black dragon known in his short life of knights or lances or swords?

He realized suddenly that a question was being addressed to him. "You, shepherd! You graze your flock on the mountains, is that right?" the knight was asking. "Did you ever see any dragonsign up there? Any sign of a lair?"

The shepherd shook his head again. "Knights came here before, asking me. No, no dragonsign on my mountain. Couldn't bring my sheep up there if there was dragons, now, could I?"

As always, the crowd nodded in acknowledgment of this obvious truth. The shepherd added, "Now, that one I saw tied on the horse. I don't think that one looked the size to take a sheep. Lamb, maybe. Young lamb. Not a sheep, though."

The young knight scowled at this belittling of his deed and shouted loudly to the innkeeper for more ale. In the morning he would be gone with his trophy, but others of his kind would come when they heard of his deed, eager for dragonslaying. One by one the dragons would fall to the lance, the gold and green and russet and blue.

It was a harsh winter that came to the valley that year, filling the passes with snow, so that the village was cut off for weeks from the rest of the world. By the time the snow began to melt, the shepherd had sold his flock, telling the buyer, "Getting too much for me, climbing up the mountain every year. Slowing down. Ache in my joints these days."

He pocketed the gold, little as there was. He might have gotten a better price at the spring fair downriver at the market town, but there wasn't time for that.

He made one last stop before he left the village, at the graveside of his wife. He knelt for a moment on the damp, cold ground, but after so long he hardly knew what to say. "Not like a dragon," he thought, getting stiffly back to his feet. "We forget."

Without his flock, he was only three days climbing up to the hidden cave, even with the half-melted banks of snow blocking his way. From time to time he glanced up, and at last he saw them, the faraway specks that were dragons circling overhead.

At the very back of the fissure in the rock, beyond the carcass of the blue-green dragon, the precious gold-veined broken shells were still untouched. Carefully, he picked them up, the green, the red, the jet, and put them away in

his pack. Then, using his knife, he began to cut away a single hollow wingtip bone from the dried and leathery remains.

It was different working this half-raw bone, scraping away the adhering hide, carving out the holes for his mouth and fingers. When it was finished, the flute had a shrill, harsh tone, with a melancholy pitch that hinted of pain and bereavement.

The shepherd put down his tools and stepped outside his hut. Lifting his head to the sky, he put the flute to his mouth and began to play. It was a song of peril and death. Dragons writhed on sharp lances tearing through their vitals. Swords hacked at broken scales, at the delicate bones of their wings, breaking, crippling. No longer able to fly, the dragons twisted, turning in vain on their tormentors, helpless against the steel of their weapons.

Dragons died. Their blood poured out onto the green grass, singeing it brown. Their sightless skulls were impaled on spears as trophies. Their mates circled in the sky, bereft, keening their grief, while their bones slowly bleached bare and white, to crumble at last into powder and dust.

And constantly as a counterpoint to the song, repeated again and again: Flee! Far away! Far away!

The shepherd played until his lips could not shape another note, until his fingers, with their aching joints, could barely move. When he put down the flute at last, the sky was empty.

Alone, he waited on the mountain, but the dragons did not return.

And when several days had passed and he was sure, he took both flutes and snapped them in half and laid them in the cave with the rest of the dragons' bones.

The path he took down from the mountain led not to the village of his birth but farther downriver to the market town and its spring fair. And beyond to the cities of the plains, where no man could see the snowcapped mountains and the glint of dragons flying against the sun. Ω



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FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

Two years ago, we presented a three-part series in "Forum" on the attacks being made upon role-playing games and our readers reactions to the situation (issues #160-162). We continued our look at the problem with this column in issue #181. Interested readers may also consult the editorials in issues #125, 134, 151, 158, and 171 for further commentary.

I was extremely concerned to read about all the bad publicity RPGs are receiving in the U.S. While I recognize that letters written to "Forum" are usually from victims of the worst possible circumstances, I had no idea that the problem was so serious. I was also upset by Michael Natale's letter [regarding the use of evil characters in role-playing games] in issue #152. He seems to think the readers of DRAGON Magazine know nothing about role-playing and feels compelled to inform us that "it is fantasy. It is not reality..." I believe that most of us know that, and all the letters I have read complaining about playing evil characters were from people who objected for fear of bad publicity, rather than any personal reservation.

For example, I was talking to an RPG shop owner who had to talk an overenthusiastic friend out of holding a session of Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* horror game while dressed in black robes, by candlelight, at midnight, with pentagrams all over the walls! While the shop owner had no objection to the idea (which would certainly have been either terrify-

ing or comical), he didn't want to take the risk of anybody finding out about it, especially since his friend also played in a club with fairly young children. This is the sort of silly behavior role-players are trying to stop. Nobody is accusing you of being a satanist, Mr. Natale; they are merely trying to stop the general public from calling you one. It doesn't matter how confident you are of keeping yourself separate from your character (a fairly simple exercise, I agree), because if RPGs are made socially unacceptable, you won't be given the chance to role-play *any* type of character.

Over here, thank goodness, the media doesn't have quite as much influence as in the U.S., and it isn't very interested in RPGs at the moment. The vast number of TV channels in America means that news stations are always looking for new "crusades" about subjects previously of interest to a minority, whereas in the U.K. RPGs enjoy a relatively pleasant obscurity.

Nevertheless, I have encountered certain fears and prejudices concerning my beloved hobby. Prompted by my anger at this, I recently wrote an essay on the subject. My English teacher was impressed; indeed, he was impressed enough to show it to my French teacher, who had been criticized in the essay. My initial panic at this news was replaced by a determination to get some issues sorted out. I arranged an appointment to discuss the matter.

On the day before I was due to have this discussion with my French teacher, I found myself very nervous. My words seemed rash, my criticisms overly harsh. I brought along a friend (the two of us can talk our way out of anything) for moral support. Four days later, after several more hastily arranged discussions with both teachers (both, incidentally, are Christians), we decided that we had exhausted the topic and parted on good terms.

I was astounded. I had expected floods of accusations over devil worship and strange rituals, but that sort of nonsense was dismissed in the first minutes of discussion. We spent the rest of the time talking about fears I had never considered to exist. Was role-playing an addictive game? Might it not take up valuable study

time? Did it destroy a person's social life? Was it too expensive for young, impressionable enthusiasts? Was it right to "play" with morals by playing characters of different personality types? (There was no question of actually permanently adopting a character's role, as in the infamous film, *Mazes and Monsters*). Have we role-players ever been altered by playing a character? If so, was the change for better or worse?

My friend and I could answer some of these questions, whether curious or concerned, just by explaining some part of the game that had not been known to our teachers. Other questions made me think very hard about role-playing and how I might or might not be changed by it.

The whole affair was very satisfying, and I went away feeling that I had managed to illuminate some concerned observers and clear my own thinking at the same time. My friend agreed. The moral of this little story is: Find out what people are worried about, then talk to them! Many of the worries of those who are not role-players are incomprehensible to us. Some of the concerns are reasonable and deserve reasonable answers. . . . The fact that [role-playing games] are safer than parties, football, driving, fishing, crossing the road, or getting drunk is one that should be pointed out to "normal" people. Not everyone who thinks role-players are mad is mad himself; some are merely a little misguided.

Tim Harford
Aylesbury, Bucks, U.K.

Some years ago I met a guy, and we soon became friends. We had both been role-playing for a number of years, and we were part of a group that met regularly at my house. In fact, we became such good friends that the friendship extended outside of the role-playing meetings. This went on for three or four years.

Then, one summer, he joined the Baptist Church and became a born-again Christian. He immediately denounced role-playing as being linked with satanism and came of the opinion that role-playing was evil. Now, this was from a

player and GM of six or seven years' experience. Needless to say, there was no satanism involved in our regular game meets, just clean fun for a few friends who liked to role-play.

That was two and a half years ago now. Since then, he has occasionally returned to our group to role-play but has always denounced it again afterward. Our role-playing group has grown in size and still meets on a regular basis. None of us have ever been satanists. Although I am a subjective observer, I would not say that any of us are evil. My friendship with this guy has been on an on-and-off basis as I have done everything in my power to keep him as a friend.

However, things came to a head recently. He showed up at my house for the sole purpose of calling our friendship to an end, his reasons being my liking for horror films, the fact that I role-play, and the fact that I have just begun to turn my enjoyment of role-playing into a money-maker with my first project for a professional game company. I'm fully sympathetic to my Christian friend; I have not enticed him to continue role-playing with us and have tried to smooth over the waters wherever I could. I refused to accept that I could not role-play and keep a Christian friend at the same time when I am doing no harm to anybody.

My friend had a great many role-playing games, novels, and miniature figures in his possession when he joined the church. Not all of them belonged to him; some were on loan. *All* of these items were destroyed! In no way whatsoever can I see *any* logical reason behind the destruction of the printed word, in *any* form. I am against all forms of censorship, and I recall that during World War II the Nazis burned a great many books. I leave you all to draw your own conclusions.

I am a role-player. I will stand up for role-playing wherever there is a need for such support. I will not be persuaded by the church or anyone else to "give up my evil ways" as I harm no one. My role-playing group provides its members with enjoyment, camaraderie, and support without detriment to anyone.

I have, however, lost my first friend over this matter. I sympathize with role-players everywhere who have experienced this type of problem, and worse ones, too, especially the younger role-players who cannot invoke their own rights of independence yet. My advice to all role-players who are called to give up their ways is to *stay cool*. Don't get angry, and don't do anything that proves their point. If somebody makes a claim against role-players, make sure they've got their facts right. Check them out. Don't get upset and shout; instead, you want to research your own argument. It will pay off, because we are not in the wrong. Many things in this world are not right. Role-playing bears the brunt of many lies and false accusations, and it is a subject that causes paranoia and fear among the ignorant.

What first began in the U.S. has come to England. Many religious denominations have subscribed to a point of view that classifies role-playing as evil. Newspapers and magazines are beginning to latch onto this, and TV now hosts regular chat shows, on both sides of the Atlantic, where the witch hunt has begun against role-players. These shows are generally under-represented by the role-playing community, and a sinister light is always cast over those role-playing supporters who do appear. The future does not bode well.

There is a storm coming that is going to attempt to wash away role-playing and leave no trace. Before that happens, all role-players, game companies, and others involved must arm

themselves—not with weapons, threats, or anger, but with facts, honesty, and calm. Let us not become the witches of the 20th century.

Geoff Pass
Frimley, Surrey, U.K.

Issue #161 gave me some food for thought on the (old but new) issue of satanism and the D&D game. Here are a couple of notes I'd like to add:

Michael Shigetani points out that there is no organization "that represents gamers as a whole." While he might not be aware of any such organizations, I wish to point out that several exist, and to find one, you simply need to flip a few pages in DRAGON Magazine.

The ROLE-PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION" (RPGA™) Network is an international organization of gamers, headquartered in Lake Geneva, Wis. In addition to providing a newszine and other benefits for its members, it provides an avenue of communication that Mr. Shigetani may feel is lacking. Through the RPGA Network, I have met many gamers both locally and throughout the United States. It provides an avenue of communication that other forums can't. "Forum," for instance, is not the place to find gamers in your local area (though a couple of people have found me that way). But the classified-ad section in the RPGA Network's POLYHEDRON® Newszine is just such a place; to find someone in your area, and call or write.

I point out the RPGA Network only because it is the one with which I am most familiar. It is not my intention to "brag up" the network, though I normally don't hesitate. My purpose is simply to point out that organizations of gamers do exist, and they are many. For information on a local game club, check with local libraries, schools, or gamers.

Craig Barrett's point about creating a risk-free world is excellent. I long ago came to the conclusion that some day someone would come out with a study proving breathing is dangerous to our health. When that happens, we'll all have to walk around wearing signs saying, "The Surgeon General has determined that breathing can be dangerous to your health." A humorous point but a true one, in my view.

Finally, I turn to the fundamentalist Christian point of view. I can express only sympathy at some of the things I hear. I know a number of fundamentalists, born-again, and others, and they are nice people on the whole—just like gamers, right? But some of them are decidedly short-sighted and narrow-minded in their views. People who cannot allow for any variation in the beliefs of people trouble me, and I don't know what to do about them. This has been a large problem for me in the area of RPGs. I have seen these people have RPGs removed from schools and electronic bulletin boards (and other media) all in the name of what is right and good.

It makes me wonder. They go on about their right to get the world to believe what they want, which is okay with me. But they, in doing so, trample on my right to do the same. I won't point out any people because we can find them anywhere we live.

Aaron Goldblatt
Fort Worth TX

I am a freshman at UW-Madison, majoring in psychology and drama. Once I get my degrees, I plan to enter the seminary and become a Lutheran minister. I've played role-playing games since I was in the fifth grade, and I've been a Christian for much longer.

I've played most RPGs out on the market, but more often the AD&D game than anything. I'm

currently involved in two campaigns, one good and one evil. I personally enjoy the good campaign much more, but I've learned important lessons in the evil campaign. Evil characters don't usually live very long, because someone else in the party usually wants that *vornpal sword* more than an extra character in the party. You can't trust anyone, and what good does it do you to have 5,000,000 gold pieces? You end up wasting it on guards (whom you can't trust), traps, and protection spells with expensive material components. Also, demon lords are worth more experience than devas, so why *not* be good?

There is nothing inherently evil about the D&D game! The "evil" symbols on page 42 of the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG* are not satanic. On the contrary, the pentagram is a Christian symbol representing a Christian with arms outstretched, feet firmly planted in the ground, and face turned to Heaven. The satanists (being unoriginal) reversed it in irreverence. The equilateral (thaumaturgic) triangle is a symbol of the Divine Trinity, and the circle is a symbol of the Eternal God. As far as the Greek letters in the magic circle, I used half of them in my last calculus test. Are math and most sciences evil?

There is nothing wrong with a choice of good and evil. We all face that choice daily, and to say "You aren't allowed to be evil" is a bit naive.

Lastly, I would like to point out the section marked "THE GAME" on page 9 of the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG*. A touch of realism is necessary for continuity, but it is still a game, just as one can play Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and still be a good person. A *play* has that name for a reason, just as RPG stands for role-playing *game*.

Dale Critchley
Madison WI

I am writing to you about the last two term papers I have written. I am a sophomore at UNH, majoring in electrical engineering, but I have had two English courses that required research papers. One is about the vocabulary of RPGs, which I have just finished. This one prompted this letter, since I used articles from DRAGON Magazine as sources for my paper. I was surprised that I could use the techniques from linguistics to study the word usage in RPGs. The games have generated lots of vocabulary that I commonly use now.

The first paper was on the possible psychological effects of RPGs on players. I used articles from psychology journals. The conclusion of my paper was that there are no definite connections between RPGs and suicide cases of players. In fact, there was an article I found in which the D&D game was used to help children develop cooperation skills. This research was in support of what I believed, but I tried to find sources that contradicted that view. None of those articles were published in journals because such ideas have no basis. Conclusion, RPGs do not have harmful psychological effects.

I would just like to thank all the people who work so hard to create DRAGON Magazine, since I have benefitted from the magazine not only in gaming aspects but in academic aspects as well. Keep up the good work!

Michael Neveu
Nashua NH

I've been an AD&D player for 10 years now. All this time I've been hearing *all* sorts of groups putting down RPGs. I don't know about my fellow gamers, but I'm not going to continue to take this. I suggest a course of action to TSR and my fellow gamers.

First, go to civic and church leaders. Explain to them and show them what RPGs are really all about. Second, stand up for your rights. This is about more than just RPGs and gamers; it's about us being denied our civil rights. I don't think we should allow people who don't understand what gaming is all about to deny us a means of entertainment that we enjoy. Besides, I'm not going to let a bunch of sanctimonious hypocrites dictate to me. If we don't stop them right now, they will eventually outlaw RPGs. I don't presume to speak for anyone else, but I'm not going to just stand by and let this happen. Therefore, I urge and ask everyone connected with RPGs to speak out and make your voice heard. Most importantly, we have to make the general public aware of the crime being committed against us: censorship.

If we don't make our point of view known, how can we expect anyone to begin to understand? We should not allow the myth to continue that RPGs or gamers are evil or satanic. The poor confused souls who think so should be shown how wrong they are. Informing these people is the first step to gaining acceptance for RPGs and gamers alike. I'm writing this letter to you, the gamers, but realize it's the nongamers who have to be reached. We can't do this by writing letters to gaming publications. Instead, write to newspapers and congressmen. Talk to the people who need to hear us.

Richard Doyle
Union MO

Recent "Forum," letters often start out like this, "I am a Christian and an AD&D game player . . ." It's as if these writers feel it is necessary to lend a sense of "Christian goodness," to the "onerous" AD&D game. This is truly preposterous. One does not have to excuse his role-playing to anyone. When someone tells you that he plays the MONOPOLY* or TRIVIAL PURSUIT* games, he doesn't preface it with an explanation of his religious beliefs. To do so here demeans the game.

Having been a player for 13 years and the head of a school gaming group, I have seen all kinds of role-players. Most of these players never had their religious beliefs compromised, and all were welcome to participate in our shared world. A few players over the years have been Muslim and one player was a Hindu, but for the most part they were undoubtedly Christian since Christianity is the most prevalent religion in this area.

If any players voiced objections with the game, it would be explained to them that not playing is an option that is always open to them. None of my players have ever asked if the AD&D game fits into any sense of "Christian morality," and absolutely no one has ever been forced to play. In fact, in the few times that our group has been disrupted by difficult players, it has been because of their attitudes and their inability to separate their characters from themselves. These players would object to any actions by other characters (PC and NPC) if it did not meet with their personal moral standards and rules. They lacked the ability to fantasize and let themselves be swept away to a different world. After all, that is the greatness that the AD&D and all other role-playing games offer.

In deference to Mr. Bartmess (issue #162), good does not always win in our world, and the players are consistently not evil but not necessarily lawful good or neutral good. It would seem that in Mr. Bartmess's campaigns, it doesn't really matter what actions the players take, since good will always defeat evil. Prede-

termination of the outcome of an AD&D adventure removes the "adventure" and robs the players of the uncertainty of victory. Mr. Bartmess's players must surely lose battles, but they know that eventually the war will be won. The adventurers in our AD&D game world often unwittingly unleash more evil than they initially set out to destroy. The players affect the outcome of the game through their actions, and they often "screw up!" However, these moments are often the most memorable and open up role-playing possibilities for months to come.

Mr. Bartmess makes the comment that "there is elemental evil in the real world," and that messing around with Ouija boards, tarot cards, and the like will break down the barriers between ourselves and Satan. This is the same kind of thinking that has so disparaged the AD&D game. To believe that using entertainment objects such as fortune-telling devices will somehow bring Satan into your life is as ludicrous as claiming that the AD&D game is the tool of the devil.

Our game club often uses tarot cards and the like as props in our CALL OF CTHULHU* adventures. Narrow thinking not only destroys role-playing opportunities but limits one's ability to encompass all of the richness of this alternate world. It is a short step from Mr. Bartmess's point of view to criticism of the Buddhists, Hindus, Daoists and other religions for their rituals and beliefs.

Jeffrey S. Kennedy
Lansing MI

I was very interested to see a sampling in issue #161 and 162 of the letters you've accumulated that either defend D&D and AD&D games or comment on the attacks being made against these games. Thank you for including my letter among them. I consider myself to be in very good company.

But isn't it about time we went over from defense to "attack"? I'd like to comment on some of the good things about AD&D games—good, not merely from a fan's point of view, but from a societal point of view. (Yes, Virginia, there are generally beneficial aspects of D&D and AD&D games, if only people would take time to look for them.) I'm going to talk just about the AD&D game, which is the game I know, but I have every reason to believe that my comments cover all role-playing games.

First, the AD&D game is *not an adversarial game*. In a properly run campaign, the players do not consider the DM to be an opponent, and you don't have to defeat another player in order to win. In fact, defeating another player isn't going to do you any good. The games simply aren't oriented in that direction.

This leads me to my second point: the AD&D game teaches the sovereign virtue of *cooperation!* With the exception of the exceedingly rare solitaire game, you have to cooperate with the other players in order to succeed at an AD&D game. As TSR incessantly points out, the game is designed so that, when properly run, no one player character can survive on his own. It takes the combined and effectively intermixed powers of all the player characters to win an AD&D game.

Is anyone out there listening? In a world that has become so small, thanks to the modern technological miracles of travel and communications, we can no longer afford the luxury of determinedly going our own way, independent of everyone else and immune to everyone else's interests. The days of isolationism are over. Cooperation is now the name of the *real* game in the real world. We have become a world of

neighbors, and unless we can learn to regard other people as potential partners, we are all going to be in a great deal of trouble. *The AD&D game teaches that!* If there were no other value to AD&D games, this single fact would deserve enormous consideration.

But there are other values. Do you worry that your children aren't learning to read? My mother was a high-school English teacher here in Colorado. Some of her students didn't want to read, either. Shakespeare and company, the usual fare offered in high-school English classes, was not only beyond their capacity, it was also completely without interest to them. But a lot of her students were "stompers"—sons and daughters of local ranchers. She thought that if she could start them reading something they liked, even if it was "low tech," the growing interest in reading would bleed over into other areas. Do you know what she started them on? Western novels. Louis L'Amour. Zane Grey. Max Brand. It got so that the high-school library couldn't keep these books in stock. And, yes, the growing interest in reading did expand into other areas.

Now, while the AD&D game isn't classical literature, neither is it easy reading. It requires concentration and a degree of dedication, virtues that educators claim is lacking in modern students. But the AD&D game obviously interests a wide variety of people, and in order to play AD&D games *you have to be able to read!* Not only that, you have to be able to read well. You have to study the rules. You have to know what's going on. *So let your children read!* Let them read what interests them. Get involved in what your children are doing. Find out what kind of AD&D campaign they want to play in. Guide them to the right kind of world, and their interests are going to expand. You will soon discover that *they* have discovered that there are other worlds to explore. The library is full of those worlds, and all your child needs is a starting point. If the AD&D game is what he's interested in, make the game that starting point.

Did I mention concentration, dedication, and study? They go hand-in-hand with any kind of role-playing game. You can't get into the game if you don't have those attributes, and interest in the game will quickly build those attributes—through the example of other players, if in no other way.

How about initiative and imagination? The AD&D game breeds these attributes, too. No one "coasts" through a game: The other players won't allow it, and the whole environment of the game encourages *every player* to take part. Sure, in the beginning a new player has the luxury of just going along, watching what the other players do. Very soon, however, he's going to be encouraged to get involved in the action and start taking the initiative, especially if his character has skills or abilities that the other player characters lack. This means using his imagination, to image himself in a totally different environment. Exercising the skills of initiative and imagination in one area means he'll start using them in other areas—like the real world—as well. Isn't that what we want?

I'll add self-control to the list. The AD&D game isn't easy on the ego: You have to take risks in order to succeed, and you run the particular risk of failure. Player characters get killed off. This is something you have to learn to take in stride. I won't tell you how many of my PCs have met an ill-deserved demise, or how many temper tantrums I threw before I learned that the same thing has happened to a lot of other players. But I learned, and that's the point. You learn to accept disappointment and momentary defeat in order to come back from them,

and you keep on playing until you discover the way to victory. Do you know of anyone in the real world who can't use that particular lesson?

The there's ambition and leadership. To tamper with real literature, let me paraphrase: "Breathes there a player with soul so dead, he never to himself has said, 'I want to be a Dungeon Master?'" The DM is the ultimate leader of the group. You have to work hard to be a DM. You have to know the game at least as well as the best of your players. You have to take time by yourself to create your own world. In other words, in addition to being ambitious and a leader, you have to be a self-starter, willing to work on your own, and you have to be creative. You have to know how to communicate with your players. You have to be even-handed in settling disputes, and you have to be fair. Not everyone succeeds at this, but the challenge is open to all.

I could go on, but what's the point? If these virtues aren't enough to persuade educators and parents that AD&D games (and all role-playing games) deserve a closer look, those educators and parents had better look to themselves. Let them examine their own motives and values. Do they want to raise and train young people who will take over the leadership of this nation? Or do they want sheep and robots who won't cause trouble or rock the boat?

Read through your history. The people we consider to be great men and women were, above all else, boat rockers. They were unwilling to accept the world as they found it. They wanted something better, and they had the courage to reshape the world to fit their personal vision of what it should be.

The AD&D game is one tool that can help build such people. Emphasis: *One* tool that *can* help. It's a game, and there's no better way to teach than through fun. The game deserves to be viewed in that light. I just hope it won't ruin the fun for players to find out how good the game is for them.

Craig H. Barrett
Canon City CO

Attention, gamers! I have been playing various role-playing games since I was nine. I have had a steady subscription to DRAGON Magazine for the past two years and have kept a close eye on "Forum." For the 16 years I've been alive, nothing has irked me more than finding out about organizations such as BADD and reading about the various talk shows and what-not that have thrown the game in the mud and stepped on it. Well, for once in my life I'm not going to take it! Most of the people I know have, at one time or another, played a role-playing game and enjoyed it. What's the problem? I don't think anyone out there can say he fully knows. I do know, however, that it is not right.

Well, what can we do about it? Just us, the average gamers? I'll tell you. Write your congressmen. That's what they are there for! Write to some of those talk shows like *60 Minutes*, and when you're done writing, get your friends to write and tell them to get their friends to write. Get your parents to write. How about holding a gaming session open to the public? Let them see what it really means to play the AD&D game. There are countless other things we can do to stop this atrocity. We as a whole need to let our thoughts be known. Don't be afraid to voice your opinions or thoughts. If everyone took some kind of nonviolent action, which is what we need, we would rock the boat, but it would make one hell of a wave that would be hard to ignore.

If you print this, would you please print my

full address? I'd like to find out other ideas on this subject (and, of course, maybe some new ideas for the game itself).

Nathan Nieman
PSC Box 2204
APO SF 96293

I just finished reading "Forum" in issue #160 and was once again dismayed to see that there are still advocates of the "AD&D game is an outlet for satanism" school of ignorance. I have avoided being exposed to the TV episodes of *Sally Jessie Raphael* and *Shirley* by simply refusing to own a television for the past 10 years. I prefer to spend my leisure in less passive but more stimulating and educational pursuits.

I was first introduced to the AD&D game while in graduate school in 1981. A friend related episodes of her game to me, which I must admit sounded rather bizarre. ("I see," I said. "You say that last night you built a crash pad outside a city wall for your friends to land on because they were catapulted out of the city, then you ran off into the woods where you defeated a band of orcs? Uh-huh. What's an orc?") However, after I actually observed and participated in a gaming session where I was able to make a few intelligent moves, I realized that one could become far more imaginatively and creatively involved in role-playing games than in any sort of board game. The strategy and risk-taking thrills can only be compared, I suppose, to the experiences of dedicated bridge and chess players.

Our DM was thorough, intelligent, and fair. His ability to develop a challenging and stimulating world was a model for those of us who later attempted the DM's role. During the five or six years that I've played the game, both as a player and a DM, we *never* simulated anything that even remotely approached satanism, devil worship, or deviance. The only things ritually sacrificed were a few pizzas and many soft drinks. Regarding religion, we never "worshiped" anything, nor did we discredit or compromise the beliefs of any players in the group. We also had one of the few groups around that had fairly equal representation of male and female players.

I find that games like the AD&D game produce an equivalent of what the old practice of storytelling used to do—i.e., weave a story gripping to the imagination and perhaps even contributing to the oral tradition of a culture. Today, *L.A. Law*, *The Simpsons*, and last night's ball game determine our fun and culture. While perhaps entertaining, network programming is passive and exists only as a vehicle for advertising. In role-playing games such as the AD&D game, people actively create their own entertainment and learn in the process.

As a final note, none of the players in my group have become satanists, nor have they committed suicide, animal (or human) sacrifice, child molestation, or murder. We haven't run around in sewers, terrorized picnickers in the parks, or vandalized the property of people we haven't liked. We have gone our separate ways but are all making positive contributions to society. Rachel now has a Masters in theology and is working among the poor in Brazil with the Mennonite Central Committee (an organization not known for devil worship). Peter is an M.D. in the United States specializing in family medicine. Alex is a sales manager for a company in Toronto. Shanley is finishing her Ph.D. in linguistics on the native peoples of northern Canada. Joycelyn (the last I heard) is a co-director of a community drop-in youth center in

New Brunswick. Steven has started his own computer consulting company as he studies electrical engineering at McGill University, and I have a Masters degree in counseling psychology and am the director of the Student Counselling Service at a small Canadian university.

I cannot say that participation in the AD&D game directly contributed to our various accomplishments and successes, but it did provide diversion and entertainment, developed friendships, offered decision-making and leadership opportunities, and promoted "fair play" and a unique situation in which to practice judgment and teamwork. I can definitely say that participating in the game did not take anything away from us.

Don Jamieson
Fleurimont, Quebec

I am sick to death of narrow-minded individuals who think they can dictate what is an acceptable pastime and what is not.

My hobby doesn't hurt anyone. It can be enjoyed anywhere. This hobby's expense is up to the individual who starts it. My hobby is no one's business but my own and that of its other enthusiasts. My hobby is playing the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

I can't tell just anyone this without him running off at the mouth about satanists, lunatics, or some kid committing suicide. "You play that evil game?" they say, and they give you that remind-me-not-to-let-you-baby-sit-my-kids look.

Why are there still people out there who insist they know more about a game they have never played than a person who plays it? I don't claim to know more about golf than a golfer or profess knowledge superior to a doctor concerning types of medicine. I have gamed for over eight years; I think I would know by now if I were praying to a demon or devil, sacrificing small children, or going out of my mind. Are these people so ignorant that they actually believe that a book can take over somebody's mind and make him commit suicide?

If the schools that ban the use of role-playing games on campus did any research whatsoever, they would realize that they are making a big mistake. They should be using the popularity of the games to implement education. By forbidding them, they are making the games popular due to notoriety and are creating the kind of negative publicity that responsible gamers are trying to avoid. Why can't schools use role-playing games to spark creativity, develop social and reading skills, and teach problem-solving skills? What's that, a constructive way to use a role-playing game? Nah, couldn't be.

We, as gamers, have rights. We are being unfairly discriminated against in a society that insures life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Why should it make a difference if my idea of happiness is rolling a natural 20 and not rolling a crust for an apple pie?

I am no monster. I'm the mother of two wonderful children, I'm in love with my husband, I have a professional career, and I am tired of the accusations. I am tired of the innuendos. I am tired of the dirty looks. Can't they just worry about the next moral dilemma and let us play in peace?

S. Lynne Mann
Cincinnati OH

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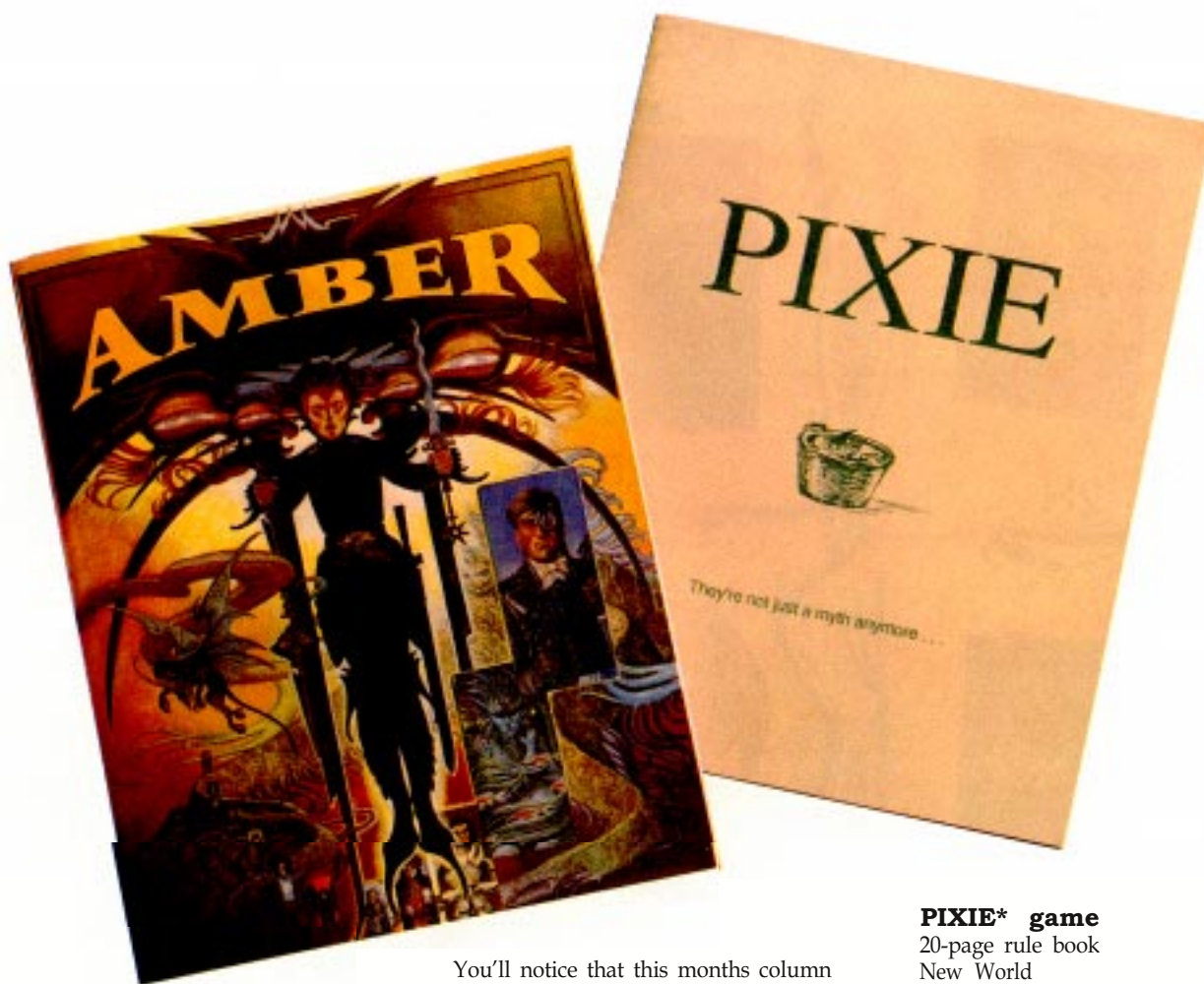
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Role-playing reviews

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From tiny to titanic (or is that Titania?)



In this, my second review of small-press publications, you'll find a rather disparate pair of games. The PIXIE* game is a very small, modestly produced product typical of hobbyists who had an idea they wanted to share with other gamers. The AMBER DICELESS ROLE-PLAYING* game, on the other hand, is a very large, professionally produced product created by a fellow with considerable design credits under his belt. Both share a distinction besides their small-press status: Each is unusual in its vision, as is revealed in the descriptions that follow.

You'll notice that this month's column also contains a second, guest review of the AMBER game by Allen Varney. When the review copies of this game were received, there was a very Amber-like struggle among the reviewers to determine who would cover it. For reasons I do not understand (and would rather not speculate upon), the others eventually consented to allow me to do it. But Allen asked to write a sidebar, and I thought a second opinion might be helpful to readers, especially given the game's unusual nature and popular topic. Neither Allen nor I saw each other's reviews until after both were written. Our opinions were independently formed and expressed.

PIXIE* game

20-page rule book

New World

Design: Geoff Tuffli

Price n/a

How many times have you wanted to play a role-playing game but were too tired to put the effort into your usual game? What you wanted was something that would be loads of fun but also easy on your head. Or, how often have you found yourself feeling too silly to take a normal RPG seriously? These times are exactly right for a game like the PIXIE game.

Concept: In the PIXIE game, you play the part of a mischievous little (3½" -tall) fairy creature intent on breaking into a human home and making it your own. The owners and any pets they may have are

just so many vermin to be chased out if they get too difficult to live with. Unfortunately, that's how the "vermin" perceive you as well. For some mystical reason, humans literally see pixies as mice, bats, etc. To your advantage, that means that they do not recognize the threat you pose as an intelligent creature. However, it also means that even if you try to talk to them, they're liable to smash you with a broom.

So why are you trying to invade their homes? According to the game background, 25 years ago Oberon and Titania (from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) had a major falling out. In a tizzy, Titania abolished the government of the land of Faerry and banished half the royal court. Sensing trouble, a major portion of Faerry's population lit out for other parts—i.e., the mundane world. When they got here, the fairies found all sorts of wonderful buildings standing about waiting to be inhabited—if only the current residents could be driven out. Your character is such a pixie: a mischievous, amoral creature who considers cooperation and compromise to be socially frowned upon.

Mechanics: Character creation in the game is extremely simple. First, you roll 1d6 + 1 for each of five attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Agility, Intelligence, and Luck. If you like, you can switch one pair of rolled numbers to emphasize an attribute you'd prefer to be higher. (Interestingly enough, this mere 20-page book has an errata sheet that states that the character example is correct in this regard, rather than the written rule, which says that you can reroll one attribute if you like.) Next, roll 1d6 +4 for the number of skill points you can spend. Dexterity skills are Melee, Bow, Throw, and Craft (making stuff); Agility skills are Climb, Stealth, and Acrobatics; Intelligence skills are Electronics and Mechanics; and there is a Special Skill, Fireball, which is treated as an Intelligence skill to create and a Dexterity skill to throw. (I'm not about to explain why pixies have Electronics or Fireball skills, but they do help make playing the game fun.)

To attempt an action, 2d6 are rolled against the sum of the appropriate skill level and its related attribute (a roll of 2 always succeeds, and a 12 always fails). For instance, to hit a cat with a pebble, a pixie would need to roll less than or equal to the sum of its Throw rating and Dexterity attribute. (Strangely, the book instructs the referee, not the players, to always make the rolls.) Next comes the recording of possessions: Characters begin the game with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Finally, players are instructed to load their characters down with a plethora of background peculiarities and quirks, even insanities. Now you're ready to play.

Combat—the "Hitting People" section—forms a very important part of this game. To quote the book: "Occasionally, one reaches the point where *nothing* seems to

work in convincing another character, creature, or thing to do what you want it to do. When communications break down to this degree, only one option is left—hit it." If it hits back, combat begins. Combat rounds are roughly three seconds long, and attacks occur in descending Agility order. To hit, you test the appropriate skill. Damage is equal to the weapon's base, plus the attacker's Strength, minus the defender's Strength (Fireball damage substitutes attacker's Luck for attacker's Strength—the second piece of errata). Each creature in the game, regardless of size, can take five points (levels) of damage before dying. Obviously, a pixie's Strength is nowhere near a human's, which means that a human hit by a pixie will often feel nothing at all, while a pixie hit by a human will usually be squashed flat. Most of the pixies' opponents will be house pets, neighborhood birds, etc., rather than humans, which makes for a slightly more even fight. Attributes and damage ratings for various creatures and their natural weapons are provided in a pair of tables.

If things are really going against you, you might try testing your Luck. If you succeed, something really good happens; if you fail (which is most likely, given that the highest Luck rating is only 6), something really horrible and probably even fatal happens.

Because pixies have to climb around a lot in our oversized world, they tend to fall quite a bit, so rules are included for falling damage. Fortunately, they only suffer one level of damage per full yard fallen, or per full two feet over a hard surface.

Experience points are given directly as skill levels, with a typical award being only one or two points.

The rules described thus far take up roughly eight pages of the game. An example of character creation fills another page, followed by roughly four pages of sample dialogue between players and a referee. Finally, there are two pages of sample adventure text—an entertaining lampoon of a modern American home—with another two pages of floor plans. Finally, there's a photocopyable character sheet (the third item of errata is the permission to copy this for personal use only).

Evaluation: Overall, the game is quite an enjoyable read. Playing it is fun as well, though somewhat flawed. The main complaints I have are that: 1) Beginning the game with absolutely no equipment makes it extremely difficult for characters to survive; and 2) There are no sample skill levels listed for the non-pixie creatures. Rolling against the creatures' attribute levels makes them seem terribly inept, but adding skill points makes them deadly. Fireballs are fairly easy to lose control of, and they are deadly to the caster when that happens. Also, Luck is entirely too difficult to save against. The end result of all of this is that player characters tend to die rapidly and frequently. Fortunately, it

is also incredibly easy to create a new PC, but this is of little consolation to players who have become attached to particular PCs, especially if those PCs have earned experience points.

Those complaints aside, however, the game can be surprisingly enjoyable. There is a real charm to playing such tiny characters in a modern world. My players, for instance, spent their first session involved in a life-and-death battle against a common house cat, among the undercarriage and suspension of a BMW automobile. It is worth noting that despite the pixies' noted disdain for cooperation, they found themselves working together to defeat that threat. Of course, they also spent quite a bit of time laughing at each other when one would fall from the axle and have to scramble back up a tire, etc.

Admittedly, the PIXIE game is just too simple to bear up as a long-term campaign. On the other hand, it works well as an occasional diversion or short campaign (five or six adventures, perhaps). I'll certainly play it again.

If you cannot find this game at your local game store (which is entirely likely), you can write to: New World, 1070 Sixth Ave., Suite #300, Belmont CA 94002, U.S.A.

AMBER DICELESS ROLE-PLAYING* game

256-page rule book

Phage Press

\$22.95

Design: Erick Wujcik

Cover: Stephen Hickman

Illustrations: Michael Kucharski

Background: Since its inception 22 years ago, Roger Zelazny's Amber novel series has been extremely popular. Ten books have been published in the series thus far. The first five are sometimes called the "Corwin Cycle" and the second the "Merlin Cycle" (not Arthur's Merlin, but rather Corwin's son), after their respective protagonists. Parts of those works were also serialized in *Galaxy* magazine. Also available is a work called *Roger Zelazny's Visual Guide to Castle Amber*. And now there is the AMBER DICELESS ROLE-PLAYING game.

For those who are not familiar with the series of books, let me take a moment to describe the central premises. First, imagine that there is one primal world of which all others are but shadows. Now, populate this primal world with a family of individuals who possess the power to travel among those shadows to any place they desire, to find anything they wish. Give them incredible strength and stamina, and make them immortal (barring violent death). Among the "Shadows," then, they are as gods. Now imagine that they are perpetually squabbling over the central reality's throne in the most Machiavellian manner. That, in a nutshell, is Amber. Throw in the Courts of Chaos—a secret, collective enemy nearly as powerful as the

Amberites; mix in multitudinous imaginative and mystical elements; write it all as a mystery in a Dashiell Hammett-style, first-person narrative that lapses on occasion into archaic, formal English; and you've got a hit novel series on your hands.

Now, design a game that lets people play members of that larger-than-life family, make the system diceless to emphasize role-playing (and to pique people's interest), and you've got the makings of a hit role-playing game on your hands.

Presentation: Physically, the AMBER game is impressive. Its 256 pages are perfect bound, but rather than the usual binding for perfect-bound game products, the AMBER game is "Smith sewn" in 32-page signatures. If that sounds like Greek to you, suffice it to say that the result is that the book easily lies open to pretty much any page you choose, making it very easy to access. The spine also remains flat regardless, which makes the book long lived even through continual use. The cover's glossy coating stands up to wear.

Visually, the game is a mixed bag. The cover painting is intriguing and evocative (though I've heard repeated, albeit minor, complaints from fans of the novels, concerning the "cyber" look of the most prominent inset). The title on the cover appears a bit bland by comparison, as does the back and spine. While such things won't turn a dedicated Amber fan away, they make the game less likely to draw a neophyte's eye. Inside is page after page of double-column text, typeset in a less-than-inspired manner and broken rather infrequently by illustrations, all black and white but typically quite good. The hierarchy of headings is confusing, especially when compared with the table of contents; it's often difficult to know what's subordinate to what else, based on heading size, etc. The result of all of this is a more difficult read than it ought to be, especially given the nature of the text. This is to say that while the text itself is engagingly written, it is of necessity *long* (as I'll explain in a moment), and the physical presentation makes it seem that much longer.

Mechanics: One of the primary attention-getters of this RPG is that it is diceless. Many role-playing gamers cannot help but scoff at such a notion, but this game's diceless nature is definitely more than just a gimmick. Wujcik has developed a remarkable system that both suits the Amber novels well and encourages role-playing in a manner second to none and far better than most. In this system, players are each given 100 points with which to buy a player character's four primary attributes (Strength, Warfare, Psyche, and Endurance), but each player must also bid against the other players for those attributes in an auction. Whoever bids highest on an attribute gains the best PC among all others in that attribute. For example, a character whose player bid highest in Strength will be the strongest of the PCs

and will always win a "straight-up" contest of Strength among them. Second place will always beat third place and below, and so on. Interestingly, this bidding process tends to set up rivalries among the players very much like those of the Amberites in the novels.

Of course, the first question that occurs to the uninitiated is "Why even bother to play if you know ahead of time who is going to win in a contest?" There are several answers.

First, the trick is to avoid a "stand-up" contest in an attribute in which your character is weak. An example from the novels is given concerning Corwin facing an obviously superior swordsman (in game terms, having a higher Warfare attribute) and tricking his opponent into stepping into an unusual patch of plant life that immobilized him by pinning his legs, thus giving Corwin the advantage.

Second, a character's "stance" can affect the final outcome, especially between two closely matched foes. In an example from my own gaming, a dazed character refused to give ground before a slightly less-adept swordsman who was both fresher and attacking very forcefully. As a result, the first character took some slight wounds. The attacking character won that encounter.

Third, even if someone is more highly ranked than you are in a particular attribute, you always have the option of getting other people to help you gang up on that person.

Fourth, if your character faces someone other than another PC, there is no way of knowing just how good or poor that person's abilities are. An excellent example of this is given from the novels. Corwin is facing another swordsman, someone he thinks is slightly better than him. But he manages to make the other fellow begin to doubt his own abilities, and the tide of the battle turns. In fact, once PCs begin to gain experience, there is no way of being certain how good *anyone's* abilities are, including those of your own character (more about this in a moment).

I should mention that the characters you play are not the Amberites from the novels. Rather, your PCs are the next generation—the sons and daughters of Corwin, Gerard, et al. This means that you can feel free to design whatever type of character you'd like—within the limits of the 100 points, of course. If, after the auction, you have points left over (and you'd be smart to save at least a few), they can be spent on secondary abilities.

Highest on the list are Pattern Imprint and Logrus Mastery, which those familiar with the novels will recognize as the essential patterns of the multiverse and are what make Amberites and Lords of Chaos able to manipulate Shadow. Also available are Trump Artistry (Trump are tarotlike cards that allow Amberites to "call" one another across the multiverse), Shape Shifting (a necessary ability for surviving

the continual chaos of the Courts), Power Words (sort of one-word spells, more flash than substance), Sorcery (the ability to weave stronger spells, at the cost of more time), and Conjunction (which allows for the summoning or creation of items and creatures, and the imbuing of items with powers). Pattern Imprint, Logrus Mastery, Trump Artistry, and Shape Shifting all have advanced versions into which characters can grow. Finally, you can spend points on personal artifacts and creatures, personal shadow worlds, and allies (some types of allies serve also as "place holders"; having them means your character is of royal blood and can eventually try to walk the Pattern or Logrus, or maybe both).

Don't have enough points? You can gain a few extra by committing yourself to a special contribution to the campaign: keeping a diary for your character, drawing Trumps for campaign use, keeping a game log, or whatever else you can talk your game master into approving. (These options are collectively another good example of how the game enhances player involvement in the campaign story.) Or, you can simply spend the extra you need, then log it as "Bad Stuff," sort of a battery of bad luck. On the other hand, if you have any points left over, you can declare them as "Good Stuff," meaning that life tends to smile on your character. It is also possible to have "Zero Stuff" and neither suffer bad nor enjoy particularly good luck. This "Stuff" serves the GM as a means of deciding an outcome that would seem random, or as a tie breaker when all else seems even. For example, a character who asks "Is the door locked?" might receive different answers, depending upon his Stuff (and assuming that the GM has not previously determined the state of that door).

Character growth through experience is unusual, too, in this game. When a story has been completed (not merely one session, but the conclusion of a major plot), the GM assigns a number of experience points and divides them evenly among the group. *But the players are not told how many experience points they have gained.* Rather, they each will have previously provided the GM with a list of what abilities they want to improve, in what order, and how much Bad Stuff they would be willing to take to receive them. The GM then updates their character sheets appropriately, *again without telling the players what their characters have gained.* Consequently, the only way of finding out how your character has grown is by continually testing his limits. Interestingly enough, that's the only way of finding out just what the powers you already possess are capable of doing. Again, this duplicates the feeling of the novels nicely (and simulates real life, I'd argue).

Evaluation: By now, it should be obvious to you that the AMBER game concentrates on playing a role and telling a story, while making game mechanics as unobtru-

sive as possible. It isn't a game for "rules lawyers"; event resolution is set firmly in the GM's hands. Nor will it suit casual players; the back copy emphasizes that it is a "mature, demanding, and time-consuming system." The game requires a lot of its participants. It takes a long time just to read: The back copy advertises over a hundred pages of tips on role-playing style and technique, and even the rules aren't so much defined as illustrated with example after example. As a GM, then, you don't learn the rules; you absorb them and make them your own. (Consequently, when AMBER game GMs get together, they tend to debate their respective visions and even those of Wujcik and Zelazny.) Even the stats for the Elder Amberites, the various characters from the novels, are given in multiple different formats, so that GMs can choose those they prefer for their campaign.

The result is an intensive role-playing experience. Without numbers in front of them, players have nothing to do but play the parts of their characters. Without rules to cite and dice to roll, they must be able to trust the GM's judgment. And the GM has to react specifically to the PCs in the guise of the world he has created. It becomes entirely obvious that the GM can do nothing until the players begin to interact with that world.

The AMBER game is absorbing. The very first time I ran it was magical, despite the fact that I was using the "Throne War" scenario (the first of three included in the book), a rather simplistic set-up that allows players to try out the system for the first time. Surprisingly, while I typically think of a group of six or more gamers to be fit only for a dungeon crawl, and three to be the optimum number for real role-playing, the AMBER game seems to cry out for large groups—to enrich the stew of story input, I suppose. Also, the game has been sufficiently engaging to maintain player interest even though I'm able to run it only once a month at present. That I find surprising for any role-playing game.

Of course, there is another consequence of that "absorbingness." GMs have to spend quite a bit of time and creative effort coming up with wide-reaching plots for their players to work through. Canned, linear adventures just won't serve. Secondly, to really give the players a fair shake, the GM has to be thoroughly familiar with all the statistics for each and every PC. Besides absorbing the rule book, they'll need to be fairly expert with the Amber novels. I've found myself rereading and studying them all carefully before feeling really comfortable in running a campaign. Wujcik himself purports to have read them over 30 times in the six years he spent working on the game.

As for criticisms of the AMBER game, I have very few. I've already mentioned my complaints concerning the typography. Some GMs have complained that the sorcery rules seem sort of thin and don't

reproduce very well what Merlin is capable of in the novels, but I don't think the answer is more specific rules. Rather, a more in-depth treatment of spell examples from the novels would be nice, following the pattern of the rest of the book. Other GMs have complained that, despite the PCs' superhuman abilities, these characters are small potatoes compared to the Elder Amberites and can't hope to stand up to them. But the second and third sample adventures in the book demonstrate ways to avoid that problem. In the second adventure, while the PCs are on hand to battle the menace, the Elder Amberites are not. (I should mention, however, that the "shrinking universe" idea in this scenario doesn't really thrill me—it strikes me as a bit silly, though others might find it less so.) In the third adventure, the PCs are used somewhat as pawns by some of the Elder Amberites, but it is in a way very much in keeping with the novels, and the PCs are still participants rather than mere spectators. (I am less than thrilled at the idea that in it Caine kills a double of himself once again, and certain persons who I thought dead are still alive, but it's only a suggested adventure, not the one and only "official" line.) These are very minor complaints.

As impressed as I am with the game, do I think it is the "end-all" of role-playing games, or that diceless systems are the wave of the future? I'll give a firm "No" on both counts. First, the AMBER game is pretty much Amber-specific. While the Amber novel series theoretically allows its characters to move through Shadow from high-tech SF worlds to magical worlds of legend, all such worlds still possess Amber's flavor. In fact, Zelazny's novels never really include interstellar travel within Shadow, and I doubt that many Amber gaming groups will, either. Second, as fun as the AMBER game can be, there are certainly times when I'm not up to such intense role-playing and would rather take part in a dungeon crawl. Finally, there is a thrill in making an incredibly good or bad roll of the dice, so I sincerely doubt that gamers everywhere are likely to pitch out

their dice collections and their most treasured tables of random results.

However, I certainly do think that the AMBER DICELESS ROLE-PLAYING game is destined for great popularity and a niche among the most respected of role-playing game designs.

The AMBER game is available from: Phage Press, P.O. Box 519, Detroit MI 48231-0519, U.S.A.

Random thoughts on a nonrandom game

©1992 by Allen Varney

My friend, John Brunkhart, tells about a 1989 game session at Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE). John, who had recently joined Customer Service at ICE, had played HERO SYSTEM* games for years but had never tried ICE's SPACE MASTER* science-fiction RPG. An ICE hanger-on who ran a campaign invited John to sit in. He spent two hours generating a character and joined the veteran players (mostly fellow ICE employees) as a new adventure began.

For starters, the characters embarked on a space journey to the world where they would receive their mission. En route, their ship entered a dangerous asteroid belt. John rolled his character's Piloting skill and achieved a critical success. Like Han Solo, he sent the ship barreling flawlessly through the field. Except that . . .

As I understand it, in the SPACE MASTER game there is an unmodified percentage chance that a ship in an asteroid field will hit something. The GM rolled this chance, right out where everyone could see the dice: collision! Then he rolled the size of the surprise asteroid: about as big as the Moon, the way John tells it. Then he rolled for location: the drives. Then he rolled damage: maximum. Before the scenario had properly begun, the ship exploded, killing all aboard.

The GM apologized but didn't retract the



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results. He wanted to keep the players' respect by respecting the dice. It worked, mostly. These guys played ICE games, after all, and they obeyed dice slavishly. "Yeah," they told each other, "that's probably what would really happen—asteroid fields are dangerous." But John, who had expected to take part in an *adventure story*, was baffled and apoplectic by turns.

Narration or (putative) simulation? Die-roll fudging or relentless justice? Here in a nutshell—or better, in a dice bag—we have one of the great religious schisms of our hobby, ranking with "realism vs. playability." I strongly favor story and role-playing values. If you want dice to rule your destiny, you could play the SPACE MASTER game, but why not go to Las Vegas and shoot craps instead? You'll probably have a better story to tell afterward.

Recalling John's horror story and many like it, I salute the courage and integrity of Erick Wujcik's AMBER game. I have some (pardon the term) random musings:

The "attribute auction" in character generation is brilliant and elegant. This fun system produces several nice effects apparent only after close study. At first it seems that canny (and cooperative) players could fix attribute prices at artificially low levels, but this oligopoly backfires as soon as the PCs receive their first advancement points, when everyone can easily buy up to every top rank!

The auction system could easily work with other point-based RPGs. It does need a large player group to work best. In my experience, the specified 100 points cannot create a well-rounded Amberite. I offer more points and free Pattern Imprint.

Another AMBER game breakthrough, the idea of gaining extra points to improve your character through extra-campaign activity (character diaries, artwork, campaign logs, etc.), depends on the honor of the players—but then, so does much else in this game. (I wonder how long before some penurious GM starts offering extra points to players in a *cash* auction.)

Advancement comes slowly, perhaps too slowly. Players have little idea how their own characters improve, let alone other players' characters. Still, this effect mimics Zelazny's novels. There, our hero Corwin doesn't know whether (for instance) he can defeat his brother Eric in fencing until they actually go at it. This game system cultivates suspicion, caution, and even paranoia—all survival traits in Amber.

Likewise, I believe the game's nonrandom approach suits Amber well. Others disagree, yet in the novels, Corwin seldom says, "If it hadn't been for [the wind/the sun in my opponent's eyes/the phase of the moon], I'd never have scraped by. The situation could have gone either way." No, when Corwin achieves something, he overcomes random circumstances. Story

logic, not some lucky break, usually motivates the occasional last-minute rescue. As in the novels, so it works in the game, and *bravo*.

An AMBER game should be nonrandom, but that doesn't mean the Amber milieu works well for role-playing. The setting selects for loners, because an individual character: 1) is vastly capable, and; 2) has reason to mistrust other PCs. Players routinely go off in their own directions. They form factions and retreat from the game room to plot. The characters have Trumps that can negate traps or blow open mysteries. They can mess with time or find anything they want for free in infinite parallel universes.

Experienced GMs can accommodate all this, and the AMBER game clearly targets the most experienced GMs (and players!). But it's tough work. Proceed with caution.

On the same note, I'd be reluctant to run this game for players who aren't familiar with the first five Amber novels, *Nine Princes in Amber* through *The Courts of Chaos*. (Regrettably, the second Amber sequence is only a Shadow of the first's reality.)

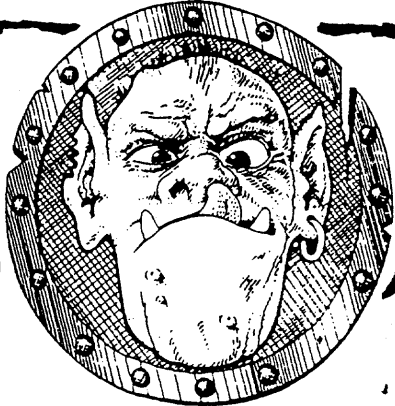
"Diceless" does not necessarily imply "ruleless." But the AMBER game dispenses with most rules as righteously as it throws out dice. At every point, Wujcik asserts the primacy of story values over systems. Notably, the Combat chapter describes tactics and their likely success, different wound levels, and so on, all in plain words with few rules and no numbers. It's rather curious reading.

To be honest, this bold approach unsettles me. Politically, I must applaud the dominance of story values over rules. The text offers copious advice, including scripts that advise GMs how to stage a fight at varying levels of detail. But I betray my upbringing. I keep looking for a way to sequence combat, hit points, and all those training wheels I grew up with.

Yet the intensity of the AMBER game indicates Wujcik is on to something. When success in every action depends on the role and not the roll, players develop a sense of both control and urgency, along with creativity that borders on mania.


I once heard a second-hand remark attributed to E. Gary Gygax, designer of the AD&D® game, that went, "The secret we should never let the game masters know is that they don't need *any* rules." Now the AMBER game has exposed the truth. Soon, I hope, we can safely enter an asteroid field. Ω

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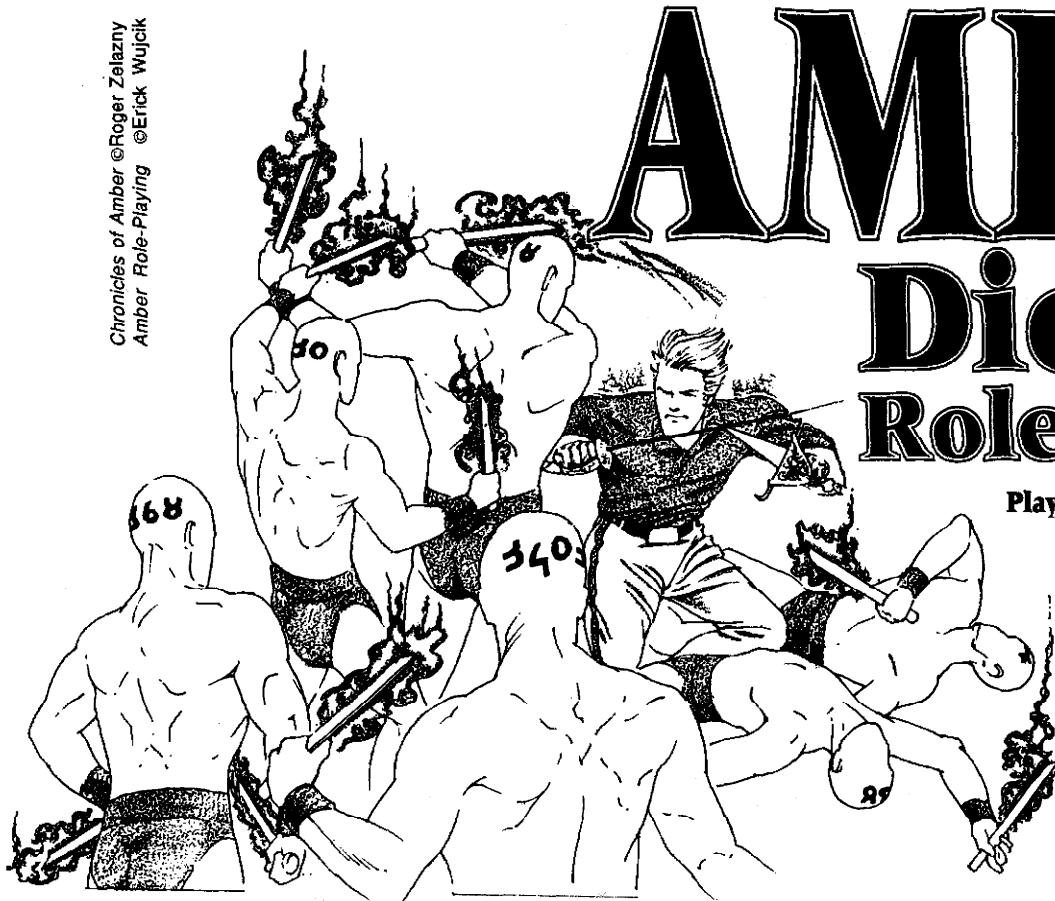


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2. Do I have to read the Amber books to play?

No. You'll find the entire fantasy setting of *Amber* contained in this one book, from the great conflict between Chaos and Pattern, to descriptions of each of twenty main members of *Amber's* ruling family, and over 130 quotes to lend flavor and detail.

3. How do I create player characters without dice?

Each player starts with 100 points to build their character, buying Powers, Allies, Artifacts & Creatures, and, for as little as one point, players can buy *Shadows*, whole universes built to their design.

But players can't spend their points until they establish their *Attributes*. Something they can only do by bidding against the other players in an *Attribute Auction* run by the Game Master.

Finally, each player determines their character's luck. *Good Stuff* costs points, and means that the Game Master will arrange for good things to happen to the character. Players short on points can get more by trading for *Bad Stuff* and misfortune.

4. How can Combat work without dice?

Simple. Combat is resolved by comparing character *Attributes*.

However, since *Attributes* are secret, the most important thing in combat is sizing up the opposition.

Do you press for an all-out attack? Bide your time and act defensively? Or try to "cheat" with a dirty trick?

Amber combat is flexible. An outstanding warrior can slay dozens, but battles between equals are not usually fought to the death. After all, once you know you're going to get smeared, why stick

around? It makes more sense to bug out. And the same goes for your opponent.

5. Doesn't Amber require good Game Masters?

Honestly, yes. To make *Amber* role-playing better we had to also make it more challenging.

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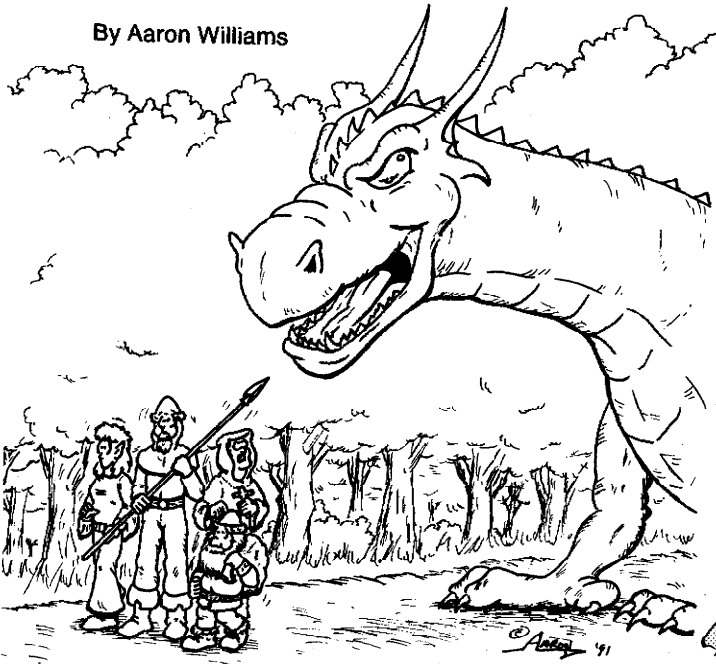
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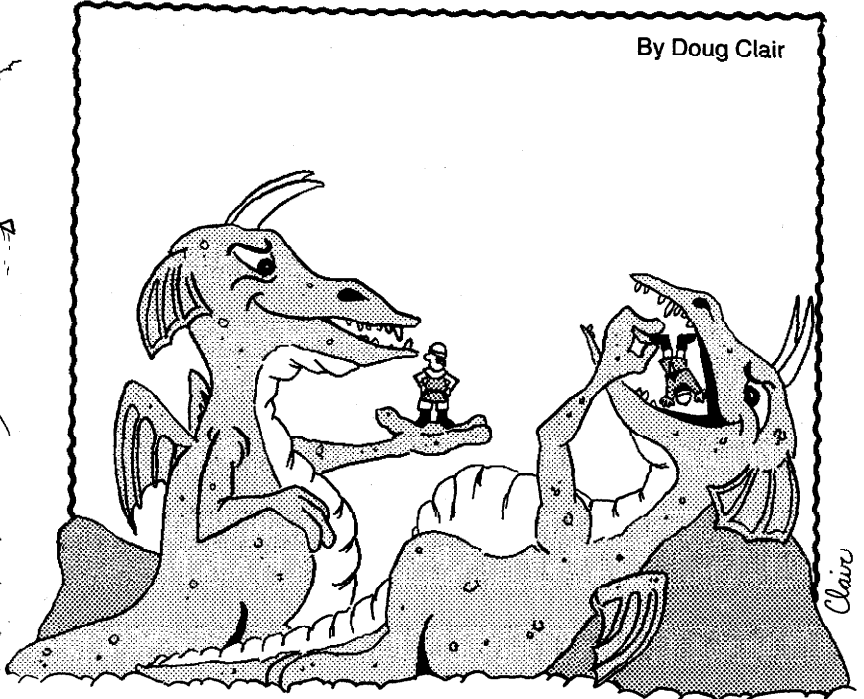
DRAGONMIRTH

By Aaron Williams

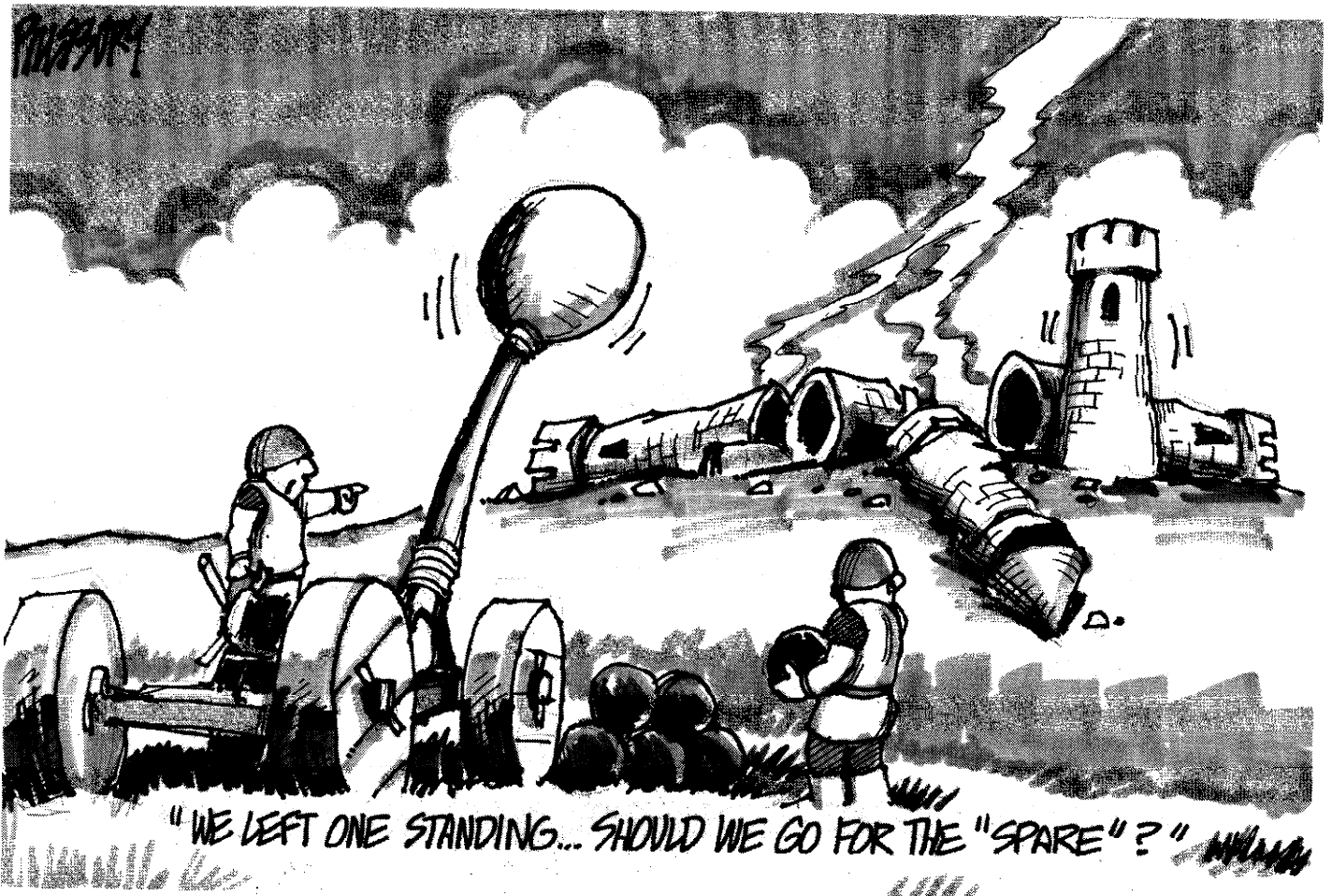


"Ahh! Trail mix!"

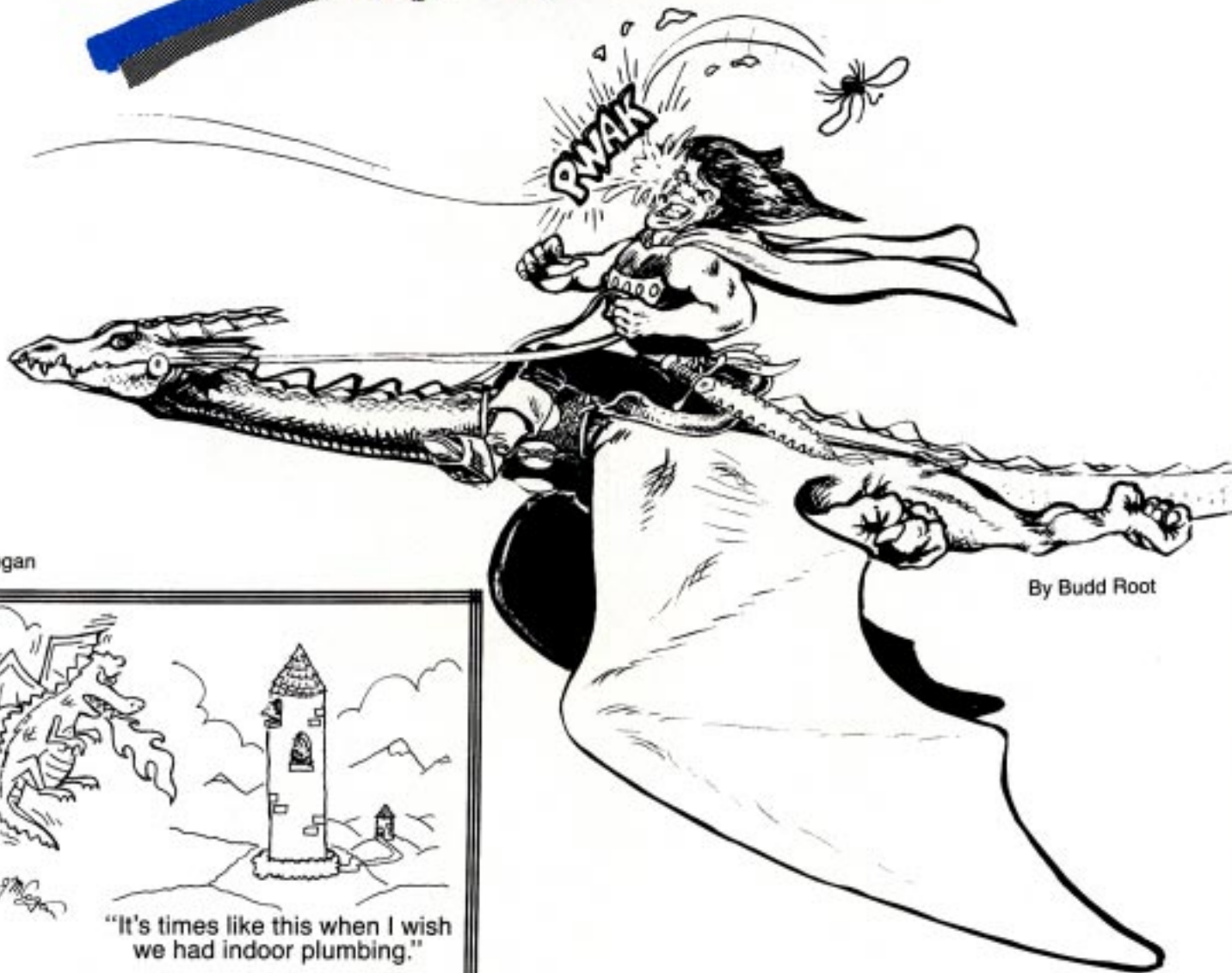
By Doug Clair



"I like dwarves. Not only are they less filling, but they're half the calories."

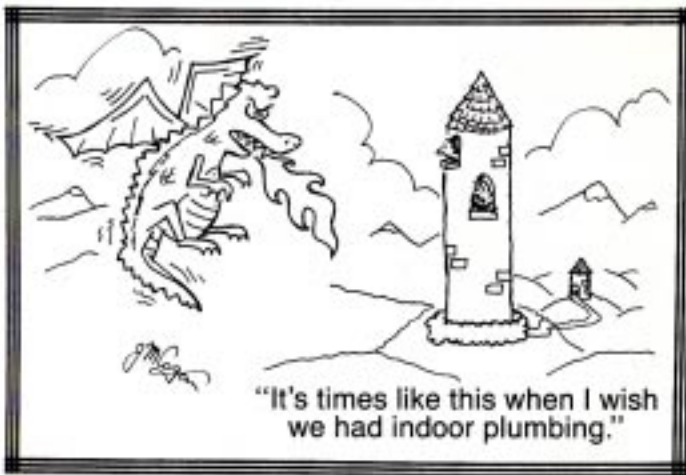


"WE LEFT ONE STANDING... SHOULD WE GO FOR THE 'SPARE'?"



By Jerry Cogan

By Budd Root



YAMARA



By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams





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Stephen D. Sullivan

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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 27



ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

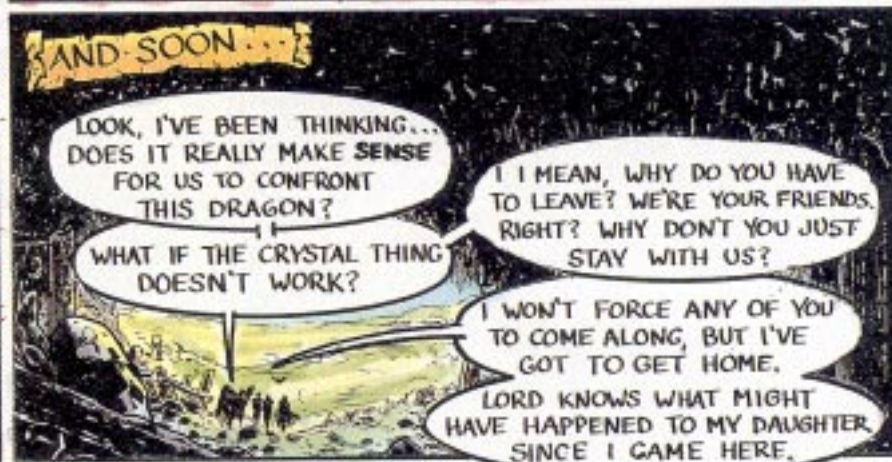
USING THE POWER
OF THE SWORD
DRAINS ME.

THAT'S WHY
I DON'T DO IT OFTEN.



WHERE ARE THOSE TOAD GUYS?
IF I SEE THEM AGAIN
THEY'LL BE
TOAD SOUP.

WE SHOULD GO,
WE'VE GOT WHAT
WE CAME FOR.



AND SOON...

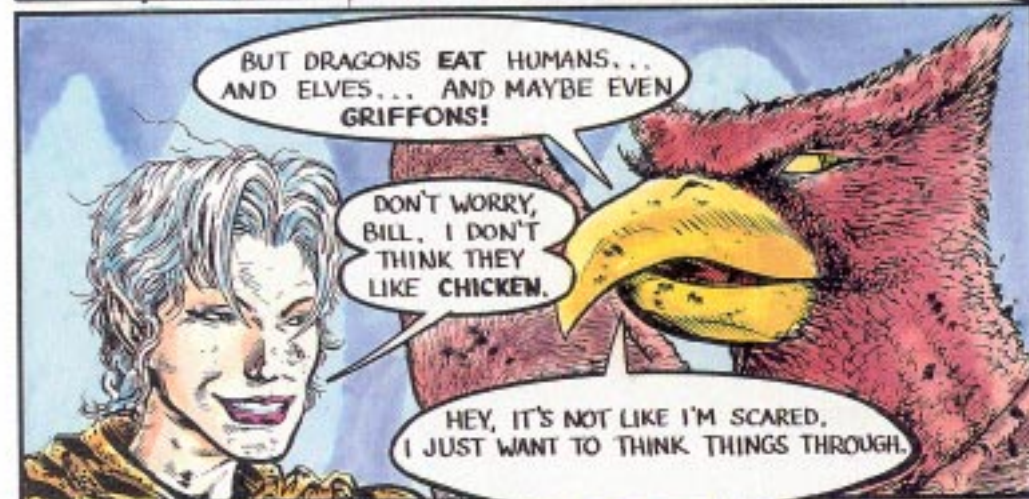
LOOK, I'VE BEEN THINKING...
DOES IT REALLY MAKE SENSE
FOR US TO CONFRONT
THIS DRAGON?

WHAT IF THE CRYSTAL THING
DOESN'T WORK?

I I MEAN, WHY DO YOU HAVE
TO LEAVE? WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS.
RIGHT? WHY DON'T YOU JUST
STAY WITH US?

I WON'T FORCE ANY OF YOU
TO COME ALONG, BUT I'VE
GOT TO GET HOME.

LORD KNOWS WHAT MIGHT
HAVE HAPPENED TO MY DAUGHTER
SINCE I CAME HERE.



BUT DRAGONS EAT HUMANS...
AND ELVES... AND MAYBE EVEN
GRIFFONS!

DON'T WORRY,
BILL. I DON'T
THINK THEY
LIKE CHICKEN.

HEY, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M SCARED.
I JUST WANT TO THINK THINGS THROUGH.



GUESS THAT'S
SETTLED.

RIGHT.

WELL, I'M GOING.

FINELLA! THANK GOODNESS
I THOUGHT YOU'D
NEVER COME OUT!

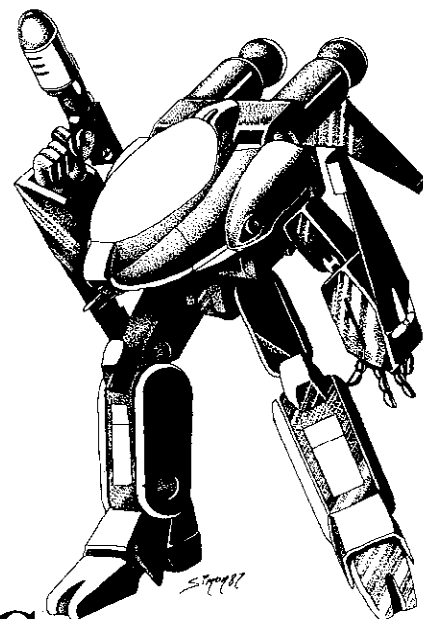
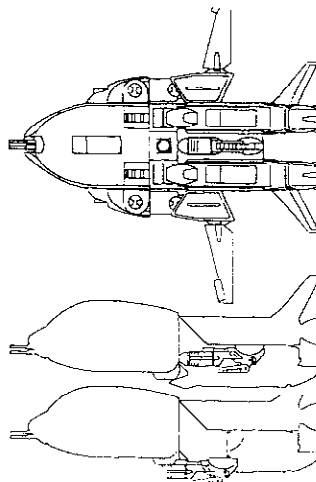
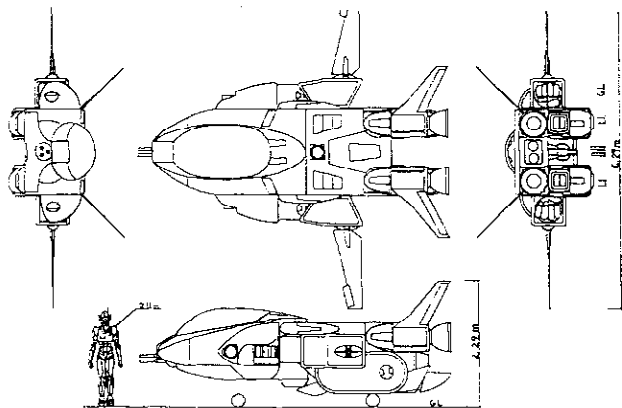
THEY TOOK HIM!

THEY ARRESTED YOUR
BROTHER QUILLIAN!



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Volume Four: Episodes 46: *Star Dust*, 47: *Outsiders*, 48: *Dejavu*. Dana continues to exhibit a bit of empathy and psychic hunches and can not shake certain feelings about the captive bioroid pilot (Zor). Available late February, 1992.

Volume Five: Presents episodes 49: *A new Recruit*, 50: *Triumvirate*, and 51: *Clone Chamber*. It is decided to induct Zor into the army of the Southern Cross. A full scale assault is launched against the Masters. Zor, Dana and Bowie get closer to the secret of the **Robotech™ Masters** and protoculture. Plus epic space battles! Available late March, 1992.

Volume Six: Contains episodes 52: *Love Song*, 53: *The Hunters* and, 54: *Mind Game*. Louie Nichols creates the *Pupil Pistol*, Dana is involved in more intrigue, while the savage space battle continues, with exciting fight sequences featuring the *Veritech Copter*. Available late April, 1992.

Volume Seven: Presents episodes 55: *Dana in Wonderland*, 56: *Crisis Point*, and 57: *Day Dreamer*. The battle continues to escalate, with terrible consequences. Zor seems to be going mad, Dana is becoming more rebellious, Bowie finds love and the mystery continues. Available late May, 1992.

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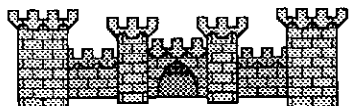
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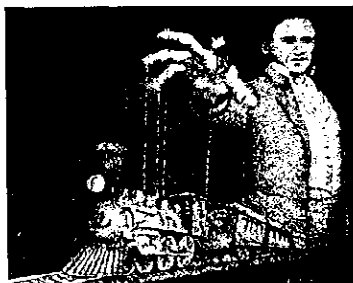
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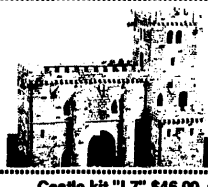
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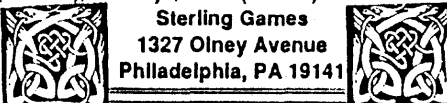
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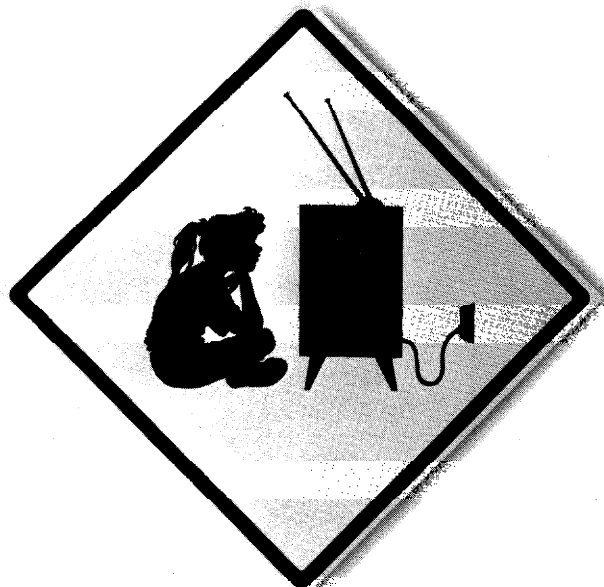
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Through the LOOKING Glass



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Small Cold Drake (RAFM)

A gallery of draconic beauty

Welcome to DRAGON® Magazine's 16th anniversary issue and our special gallery of dragon miniatures. With careful painting, these will look equally good standing in dioramas or spreading panic among your player characters. Many of these figures don't fit our normal image of dragons, however.

I want to extend credit and a hearty thanks to the crew who assisted me in this full-color gallery. Painters include Eric Peterson, with credit for the gold dragon from Thunderbolt Mountain and the ice dragon from Ral Partha; Chris Osbourne, for the cold drake, ice, and fire dragons, all from RAFM; Sam White, for the black dragon from Ral Partha and the huge black dragon from Grenadier; and Mike Bethke, for the "bellicose blue" dragon from Thunderbolt Mountain and the wyvern from Ral Partha. These fine folks also helped with the assembly of these figures.

I also want to thank all the people who

have called me at the store. It was good to hear from you, and on most occasions everyone got the help they needed. I don't always have the answers at my fingertips, and I may not be able to find them without time-consuming digging and research. My position as a retailer and a reviewer allows me access to a number of sources not available to regular hobbyists, but even these sources may not be enough. As more molding technology reaches the hobby level, more people are getting into figure manufacturing and sales. Frequently, these companies have only local distribution and leave no paper trails outside of

their own geographic areas. If you see a figure and want me to help track it down, I need as much information about the figure as possible. I won't guarantee results. This also applies to everyone who makes, sells, or imports figures. If I don't have your sales literature and some samples, there is no way I can send you business or review your products.

I also want to remind everyone that my address appears in all my review columns. Some companies may have moved by the time the article reviewing their products appears in this column, and I don't mind forwarding some messages to those companies. I am not an answering service, however, nor am I responsible for the time it takes the companies to respond. I pass along all questions and constructive comments, along with return addresses, to the company concerned within 48 hours.

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My last comments are directed only to the people who put on conventions. When you plan your conventions, remember to give your prospective "special guests" more than 90 days notice and let them know what will be expected of them. While I and all other prospective guests feel honored by an invitation, we need time to prepare, especially if we are to give lectures or run demo games. Calling two weeks before a convention frequently forces a guest to decline and sometimes causes bad feelings that everyone wants to avoid. Plan ahead.

These are good guidelines to follow when calling anyone in the hobby industry. We often forget that these people have other obligations and businesses to run. Now, let's get on with our bevy of draconic beauties.

Reviews

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RAFM 3501 Small Cold Drake **** ½

The cold drake is not a recognized AD&D® 2nd Edition game dragon. It comes as a three-piece lead kit scaled for use with 25-mm figures (it's a large dragon with 15-mm figures). The figure is on a roughly circular base, 20 mm across and about 4 mm thick. The top of the base is cut to represent a stony surface but is enough to cover with hobby grass. The figure is neatly set on the base and does not wobble or fall easily.

The drake is over 90 mm from tail to nose, but it's hunched in so it appears much smaller. The posture of the body indicates a defensive position, with four-clawed front feet curved almost into fists and the back feet dug in. The body is thickest at the rear legs, measuring 10 mm high by 5 mm thick, and tapers in the rear to a short tail. The skin has a pebbly, scaled texture that extends to all top surfaces except the head. The chest and underside are covered by a line of overlapping plates; a line of triangular spines extends down the back to the tail, and two horns extend upward from the head. The head has very good detail, with easily discernable eyes and well-done nostrils and lower fangs. The head is covered by a bony carapace.



Young Fire Dragon (RAFM)



Young Ice Dragon (RAFM)

The wings look stubby in comparison to the body. They are folded and measure only 30 mm × 10 mm, being roughly textured with clearly visible spines and a short hook on the front half point. The wings fit their holes well, with only a small spot of filler needed to complete the fit. The only failing for the wings is that they appear to be overly thick, but this is probably due to the caster's artistic license and an attempt to improve the figure's longevity and sturdiness.

The only other faults of this miniature were a slightly offset nose and a mold line; both of these, however, can add character

to the face. This figure is recommended at \$6 each.

RAFM 3720 Young Fire Dragon ****

This miniature is called a fire dragon, but it would be equally at home as a young red dragon. The miniature in this blister pack consists of four separate lead parts. The body is seated on a T-shaped base sculpted to resemble a mound of large rocks, the rear of which helps form the joint for the tail. With the tail attached, the dragon is just over 190 mm from tail to nose. The length is hidden by the dragon's posture, which closely resembles a

dog begging for a morsel. The front legs are drawn up to the chest with claws pointing down. The head is turned to the left, its open mouth exhibiting many sharp teeth. The carapace-covered head, with sunken eyes and slitted nostrils, radiates evil. Two long horns are present, and a ridge of fanned spines is at the top of the head, wing joints, along the tail, and at the end of the tail. Belly plates are clearly defined. The body is covered by pebbly scales. This dragon has a slight pot belly; this and the raised tail detract slightly from the model.

The wings are identical, so you don't need to worry about mixing them up. Each wing is slightly folded and adds about 9 cm to the dragon's length. There is little texture to the wings, and only the supporting bones protrude from the flat surface. Each wing also has a medium hole in its upper part. This can be filled with putty or left as is.

This dragon is not as neat or easy to assemble as the cold drake. Both wing joints required cleaning, both in sockets and wing stubs. Even with cleaning, the wings did not fit correctly and we needed to fill in around the joints. We also had problems with the tail assembly. The joint on our tail was poorly defined and had flash, as did the body joint. After cleaning both and putting the two together, the tail itself was about 15% smaller than the body. This required the use of putty, with a subsequent loss of detail in that area. This model is also slightly wobbly on surfaces that are not perfectly flat.

Even with the work involved, this miniature is recommended. You can't always run into a fully grown dragon, and there is a decided lack of figures between the fledglings and the large dragons on the market. For a young red dragon, this figure will be hard to beat. This figure lists at \$6 each.

RAFM 3721 Young Ice Dragon ****

This miniature cannot be used as easily for a young dragon as the others, due to its unusual features and configuration. The miniature is a four-piece kit and is blister-packed, as are the rest of RAFM's figures reviewed here. The body is perched as if taking off. The tail lies coiled and, with the legs, provides the support for the casting. The body is done in diamond-shaped, overlapping scales that cover all but the underside of the dragon and its smooth lower leg. Body parts are ringed with a mane of fine hair that stretches from the head to the upper legs and the end of the tail. A high, thick dorsal ridge topped with pointed spines rises from the back and ends at the tail. The left front leg hangs straight down, while the right is folded and looks almost like the dragon is preparing to throw a spell.

The wings are identical, with smooth surfaces and missing panels on the leading edges. The wings are slightly pitted on our miniature, and the surface is rough. These

problems could be remedied by the use of filler, but remember not to obscure the bones supporting the wing. You will also have to use some filler on the wing joints, as some gaps are evident after assembly.

The final part of the miniature is the head-and-neck assembly. Square plates protect the dragon's breast, neck, and rear side. The joint fits well after cleaning, and the mane hides the gap. The head has horns that face backward and visible ears that pierce the bony carapace. The mouth is open to reveal well-done teeth. The expression on this beast is pure evil.

This figure needs some work. In addition to the things mentioned above, you'll need to add a larger base to the figure so it does not wobble. This figure is still recommended at \$6 each.

Grenadier Models Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models

19 Babbage Road
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

Gren 2534 Huge Black Dragon

**** ½

This is a truly huge black dragon, definitely scaled for use with 25-mm miniatures. The figure comes in a box that seems to weigh a ton and contains 13 large, lead pieces. This kit took time and patience to assemble.

The main torso of the dragon consisted of three pieces. There was no flash on them, and they went together easily. We recommend you rubber-band or tape the pieces while you wait for the glue to dry, or you can just hold them together. After the body is done, the four legs should be assembled next. Some light flash is in the crooks of the legs, but this is easily fixed. The legs must be done at the same time to ensure that they mesh with the large rocky base. Wait until this much of the model dries securely before going any further.

The head joins to the neck and shows some signs of light flash on the neck and under the horns. Next comes the tail, then the wings, which are heavily textured with a leathery feel. The tail needs light cleaning, and the wing nubs may need to be trimmed slightly. The fit is very good, though.

When finally finished, this dragon is truly impressive. From tail to nose, this miniature measures just under 280 mm with a wingspan of just over 270 mm. The body stands 63 mm from its rocky base to the top of its back. The underside is protected by square breastplates, and its back is protected by overlapping plates. Its skin has a roughly textured, pebbly surface with appropriate skin sags and muscles. Huge three-toed feet grip the base, while a large pair of horns point skyward. This



Huge Black Dragon (Grenadier Models)

figure dwarfs even the other dragons.

If this dragon has a weak spot, it is the head. Detail is good, including very good eyes, nostrils, and exposed teeth, but it just isn't ferocious. The expression is almost benevolent and definitely doesn't belong on an evil dragon. Some of the crew here have started calling the figure Odie (after the dog in the *Garfield* comics). It's recommended highly even at \$29.95.

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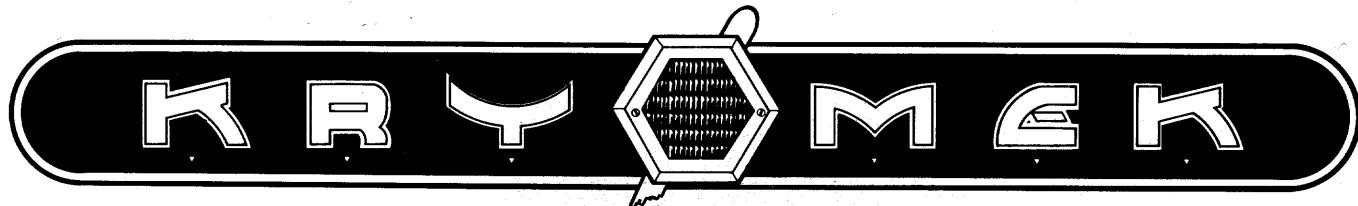
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1015 Gargantuan Gold Dragon

**** ½

Thunderbolt has been releasing its new dragons on a regular basis, with impressive results. The gold dragon here is one such miniature kit, consisting of 12 parts that collectively create a miniature with a coiled length of over 120 mm and a wing span of just over 270 mm. Being a lead kit,



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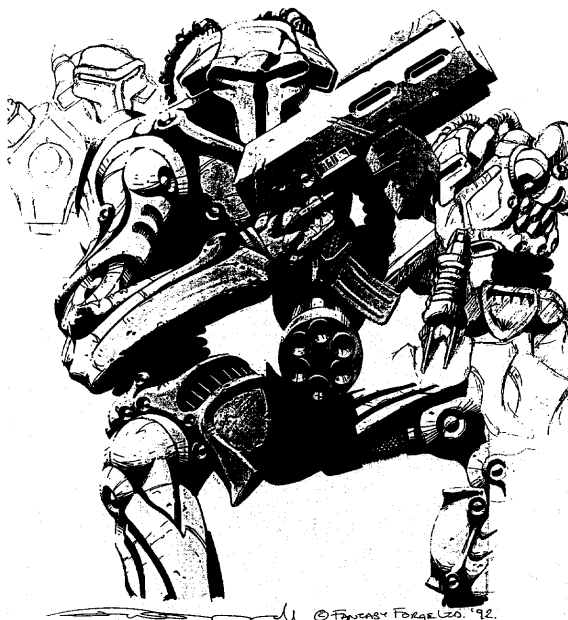
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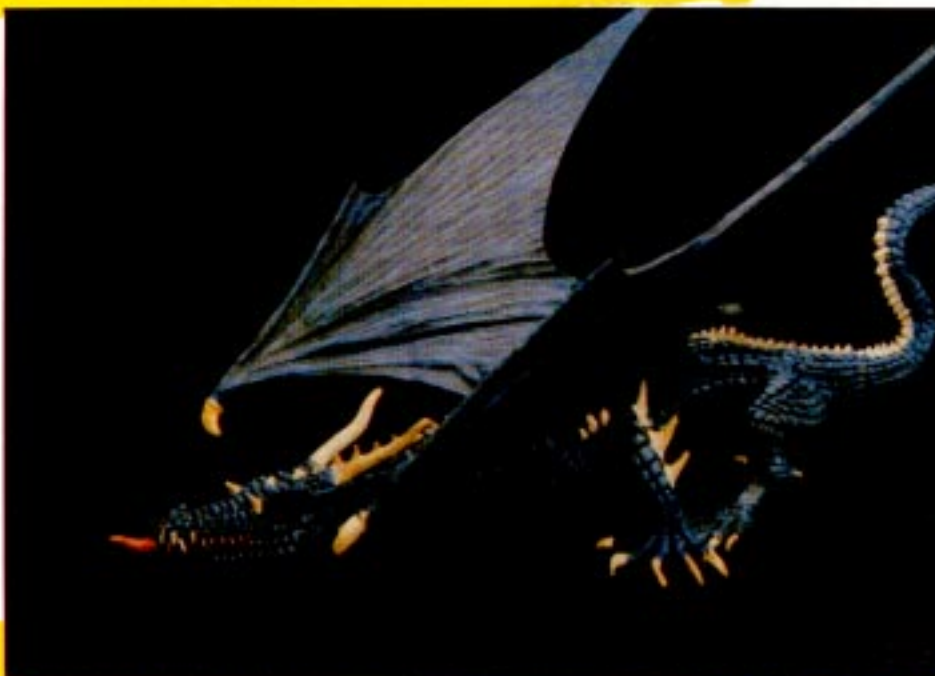
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Gargantuan Gold Dragon (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Bellicose Blue Dragon (Thunderbolt Mountain)

The head is triangular, with an almost flat face covered with overlapping scales. The eyes are set to the side of high-bridged sockets. A long tongue snakes out from a mouth lined with sharp teeth, except in the front. The neck is arched, and the scales get larger lower on the body. The chest and front legs are heavily muscled. In fact, this dragon appears to be a graduate of a body-building course; the corded muscles do not look overdone and bring forth visions of the upgraded AD&D 2nd Edition game dragons.

Two of the feet are separate castings. The right front leg is up as if striking,

support. Place this foot carefully, or the dragon will not stand firmly. The back legs are cocked as if the dragon is poised to run forward, and the tail is coiled as if to strike. All of the areas except a small spot in the lower rear have excellent scale detail, and only in that one place does the detail fade. Large, powerful wings extend from the shoulders; with their slightly concave shape, they give the illusion that the dragon could fly.

The pieces of this kit fit together very well with only minimal gaps that can be filled with the same superglue used to assemble the miniature. The directions

were clear, but you should note that many of the parts will go in at slightly different angles than shown, so you have to keep track of how the pieces are lined up. The only sore spots were the wing joints, which didn't fit quite right and needed support throughout the drying stage.

Assembled, this model can be a strong force for the good guys in a game. It's highly recommended at \$27.95 each.

1019 Bellicose Blue Dragon **** ½

This is a 25-mm scale kit containing 11 separate parts. The dragon measures just about 230 mm from tongue to stingerlike tail. The wings are slightly folded back, but straightened out they would each measure about 180 mm across. The dragon is set low to the ground, being only about 30 mm at the highest point of its body, not including tail or wings.

The dragon has an elongated triangular head similar to the gold dragon figure. The head is covered with deep-scored scales, with slitted eyes and horns on the sides. A tongue extends from a tooth-filled mouth. The dragon's expression appears almost depressed. Long and thin the body ends in a long tail with a hooked spike. The large square body scales appear to be spiked, but the tail has flat scales. The wavy, leathery wings have a well-defined bone structure visible more from the bottom than the top. The wings are rippled slightly as if the membrane were caught by the wind.

The bent legs are covered with smooth scales. When you attach the legs to the body, you must constantly check to make sure the model stands flat. If the model is assembled correctly, the jaw rests very close to the ground, though not actually touching it. I built mine differently, so it could be either depressed or stalking someone, especially with the evil look in its eyes.

The model goes together well, with gaps visible only at the feet. One problem joint is that between the body and the tail, where the body is slightly larger than the tail and requires some work with putty and a knife to look right. There was no flash on the miniature, and mold lines are well hidden. This dragon is highly recommended at \$29.95.

Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

Ral Partha Enterprises

c/o Minifigs
1/5 Graham Rd, Southampton
UNITED KINGDOM SO2 0AX

RP 11-447 Wyvern

**** ½

This is a four-piece kit that depicts a wyvern leaping into the air. It is scaled for 25 mm and is a soft lead casting. The coiled body would measure roughly 158 mm long if the coils were straightened

out. The base for this creature is an oval, 10 mm × 28 mm, with a surface texture made to resemble rocks. The base on our miniature had a slight warp that made the miniature unsteady. Even after straightening the base (to which the main body is attached), the figure is still top heavy and prone to falling over.

The head is a separate casting and includes the upper jaw, skull, ears, a malevolent pair of eyes, and shallow nostrils. This piece joins to a square block on the main body piece, set on the end of the neck where you find the lower part of the jaw. The assembly looks too square and blocky when seen closely from the side, but it fits well. A ridge of sharp spines runs down the spine, from behind the head to half-way down the tail. The body has wrinkled skin with a pebblelike finish; overlapping scales are on the stomach, throat, and "bottom" of the tail. The wings fit well into the body, but there is a rather large gap around the joint for both wings that requires some filling. The wings are textured and have good bone detail, including spurs on the wing tips and ends.

The figure is well done except for the small faults noted. It is recommended at \$7.50 each.

RP 10-460 Black Dragon of Fire and Darkness ****

Ral Partha has launched a new line of dragons drawn from the imaginations of its sculptors. This series is called Sculptors' Row, and the black dragon is the first in the series.

This lead miniature comes in a 12-piece kit, scaled to 25 mm. The body measures just over 300 mm from nose to tail spike and has a wingspan of just over 170 mm tip to tip, even with the wings partially retracted. The stocky, smooth body sets just over 30 mm above the ground, while the neck and tail are skinny and elongated. The long, thin head has small nostrils, eyes set far back in the head, and an upper jaw that includes two large tusks that jut out sideways.

Several problems may be encountered with this miniature. The tail and neck joints are smooth notches that do not quite line up and require cleaning. Neither joint gives much structural strength, and both have broken off with handling despite the use of epoxy. We intend to soon perform a procedure (that we highly recommend) in which we pin and glue the pieces together, using model railroad nails placed in holes drilled with a pin vise. Much of the problem could have been avoided by adding holes and pegs, or other such joints, to the pieces. The legs fit well but still have gaps. The only pieces that fit together well were the wings, which have pegs and holes. Even the legs must be bent slightly to make the model stand level. You will also have to file and clean mold lines and marks on the wings and some joints. You may have to bend the actual figure to get it to stand straight.



Wyvern (Ral Partha Enterprises)



Black Dragon of Fire and Darkness (Ral Partha Enterprises)

The miniature looks a little like a gecko lizard when done, but it is an interesting piece. I cannot recommend it to anyone who uses his miniatures frequently, unless he is willing to strengthen the figure. If the miniature is used for display only, this will be an interesting addition to a collection as is. Its list price is \$15.95 each.

RP 10-461 Fearless Frost Dragon ****

This is the second in the Sculptors' Row series. This 25-mm scale kit comes boxed and consists of nine soft-lead pieces. The long, slender body would be about 250 mm long if straightened out. The wing-

span is just over 160 mm tip to tip.

The figure has a long skinny head with an elongated jaw. Joined, flexible bony plates protect most of the body; the entire set-up resembles the carapace of a lobster. Two long horns rest on top of its head, and spurs on the wing ends could be used to defend itself. A tail coils back upon itself, long enough to strike at enemies in front. The legs are smooth and jointed in a manner reminding one more of a horse than a dragon. The wings are relatively smooth on the surface, but have a number of holes in them. These holes could be filled and smoothed over with putty to restore the smooth surface.



Fearless Frost Dragon (Ral Partha Enterprises)

We had a number of problems with this dragon. The head requires work to get it to fit on the neck. None of the holes in the base line up with the corresponding pegs in the legs and tail; it looks like the base may have shrunk slightly in casting. This

miniature also has more flash than I've seen on a Ral Partha miniature for a long time, and mold lines are extremely visible and require massive cleaning. Again, the wing fit is very good, but the holes detract from the wings' appearance.

We checked other kits to see whether we got a set that was an exception to the rule, but both this particular one and the black dragon reviewed earlier were the same as other kits of their kind. This is a prime example of why we should have some kind of an industry standard for kit difficulty. If you are willing to work and expect assembling the kit to be hard, you would get a good deal with these kits. If you expect a quick, easy kit, you're in for a shock. This kit retails for \$16.95.

I imagine I'll hear shouts of outrage from sculptors and companies alike, but there seems to be a breakdown in communication between the sculptors' ideas and the casting necessities. All of the dragons reviewed here had some problems, but many of those problems could have been fixed before the figures left the factory. Quality control seems to be slipping slightly, and the figures (and customers) are suffering.

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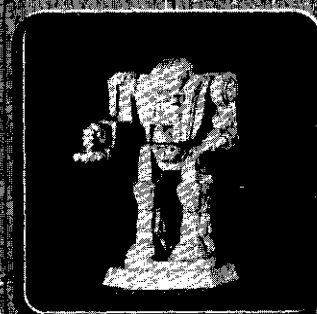
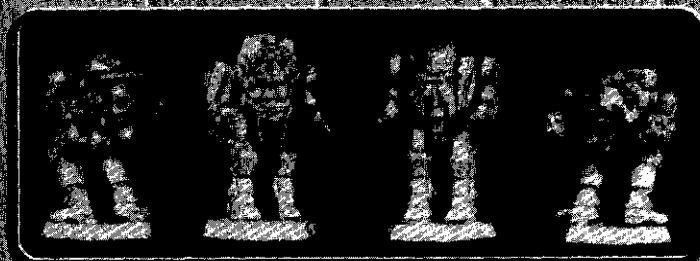
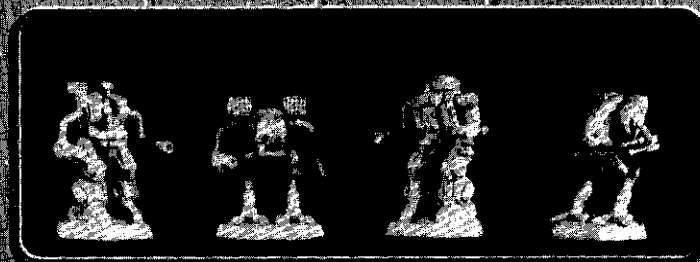
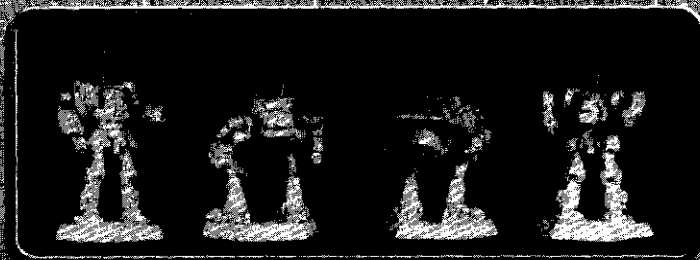


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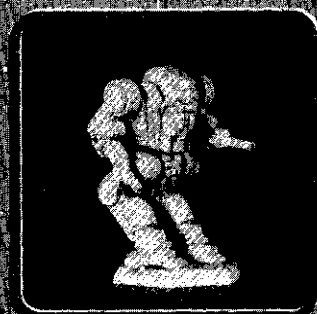
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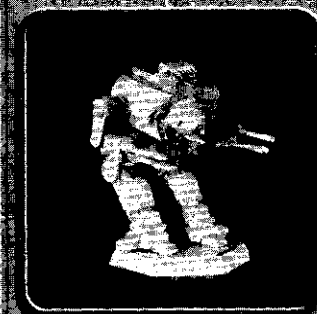
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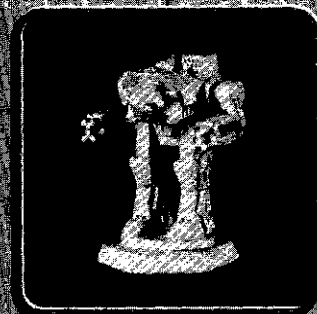
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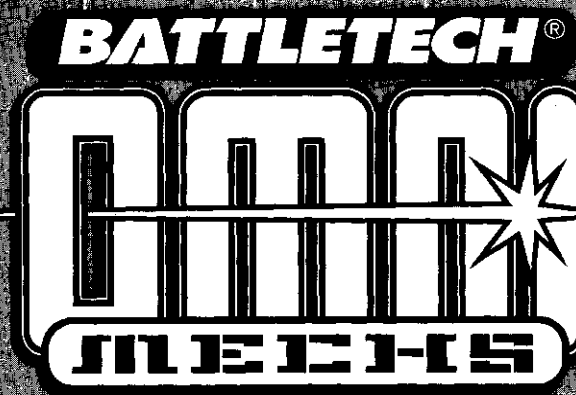
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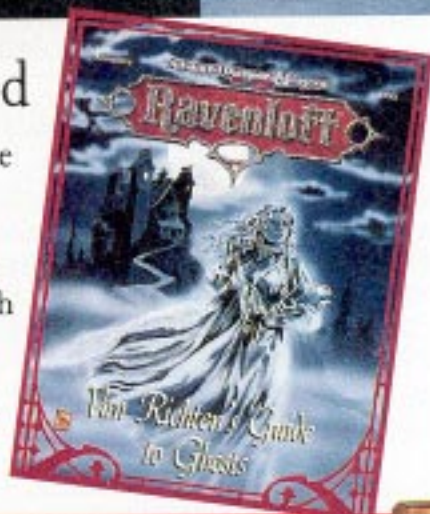
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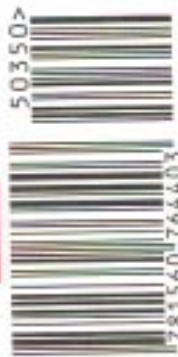
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